

## THE PALESTINE CAMPAIGNS

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# CAMPAIGNS AND THEIR LESSONS

EDITED BY MAJOR-GENERAL SIR CHARLES CALLWELL, K.C.B.

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## THE PALESTINE CAMPAIGNS

LIEUT.-GENERAL SIR ARCHIBALD P. WAVELL,  
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*WITH*  
**MAPS**

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TO  
*MY FATHER*



## PREFACE

My most grateful thanks are due to the following friends who have helped me with criticism and advice: Major-General G. P. Dawnay, Major-General W. H. Bartholomew, Brigadier-General Sir Gilbert Clayton, the late Colonel W. J. Foster, of the Australian Forces, whose recent death has deprived the Empire of a fine soldier, and Major R. H. Allen. Also to the Historical Section of the Committee of Imperial Defence, and to Mr. H. J. Hudleston, of the War Office Library, for the information they have so kindly given me.

Place-names have been spelt, generally, as they were in official documents and orders during the war, when many strange places became familiar. The scientific method of transliterating Arabic names would only make these familiar places look strange.

A. P. W.

BRIGMERSTON FARM,  
*November, 1927.*

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## PREFACE TO REVISED EDITION

THE Official History of the Palestine Campaigns has now been completed and issued. The publication of a new edition of this book has therefore been used to check carefully all facts, and especially the figures of strengths, casualties, etc., with the Official History, and to make any necessary corrections. These have been almost entirely confined to making more exact certain figures, times and dates.

A. P. W.

BLACKDOWN HOUSE,  
*May, 1931.*

# CHRONOLOGY OF CAMPAIGNS OF EGYPTIAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCE AND OF EVENTS IN OTHER THEATRES WHICH AFFECTED THEM

EGYPT AND PALESTINE.	EUROPE.	CAUCASUS.	MESOPOTAMIA.	GALLIOLI, SALONIKA, ARABIA.
1914. November 5. Declaration of war with Turkey. December 18. Protectorate over Egypt declared.	... ...	... December 28—January 3. Defeat of Turkish attack on Caucasus.	November 22. British occupy Basra. ...	...
1915. February 3. First Turkish attack on Suez Canal. November 6. Senusai begins hostilities.	... May 24. Italy joins the Entente.	... September. Grand Duke Nicholas assumes command.	... November 22. Battle of Ctesiphon.	March 18. Naval attempt to force the Dardanelles. April 25. Landing at Helles and Anzac. August 6. Landing at Suva. October 5. Salonika Campaign begins. December 20. Evacuation of Anzac and Suva.
1916. February 26. Action at Agagia. March 19. Formation of Egyptian Expeditionary Force. April 24. Action at Katia. August 4. Battle of Romani. October—November. Re-occupation of Western Oases. December 23. Action of Magdhaba.	... ... June 4. Brusilov's offensive begins. July 1. Somme offensive begins. August 27. Rumania enters the war. December 6. Fall of Bucharest. December 7. Mr. Lloyd George succeeds Mr. Asquith as Premier.	February 16. Capture of Erzerum. ... April 18. Capture of Trebizond. July 25. Capture of Erzincan.	... April 29. Townshend surrenders at Kut. ...	January 8. Evacuation of Helles. June 6. Arab revolt against Turks in Hejaz begins.

# CHRONOLOGY OF CAMPAIGNS—Continued.

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EGYPT AND PALESTINE.	EUROPE.	CAUCASUS.	MESOPOTAMIA.	GALLI POLI, SALONIKA, ARABIA.
1917.				
January 11. Action of Rafa.	February 1. Intensive submarine campaign begins.	...	February 24. Mande captures Kut.	January 22. Faisal enters Weh.
February 4. Occupation of Siva Oasis (end of campaign against Senussi).	March 6. Russian revolution begins.	...	March 11. Capture of Baghdad.	
March 20. First Battle of Gaza.	April 6. U.S.A. enter war.	Period of inaction and gradual disintegration of Russian Army on Caucasus front.		
April 10. Second Battle of Gaza.	April 10. Nivelle's offensive.			July 6. Lawrence captures Akaba.
June 28. Allenby takes over command.	October 24. Italian defeat at Caporetto.			
October 31. Capture of Beersheba.	...	...	...	
November 7. Fall of Gaza.	December 5. Armistice on Russian front.			
November 14. Action at Junction Station.	...			
December 9. Capture of Jerusalem.				
December 20. Forcing of River Auja.				
December 27. Turkish counter-attack on Jerusalem.				
1918.				
February 21. Capture of Jericho.	March 3. Treaty of Brest-Litovsk.	...	...	
March 8-11. Advance to Wadi Line.	March 21. German offensive in France begins.	...	...	
March 21-April 2. First raid east of Jordan.	...	April 14. Turks occupy Batumi.	...	
April 30-May 4. Second raid east of Jordan.	...	April 20. Turks occupy Kars.	...	
July 14. Turbo-German attack on Abu Tellul.	September 29. Hindenburg line finally broken.	August. Dunster-ville's force evacuates Baku.	...	
September 19. Decisive attack of XXI. Corps and break-through of Turkish line.	...	...	...	September 10-18. Arabs cut communications round Deraa.
September 23. Capture of Haifa.	...	...	...	September 28. Bulgaria asks for armistice.
September 30. Capture of Damascus.	...	...	...	...
October 8. Occupation of Beirut.	...	...	...	...
October 26. Occupation of Aleppo.	...	...	...	...
October 31. Armistice with Turkey.	November 11. ARMISTICE.	...	October 30. Surrender of VI. Turkish Army.	

Raid on Turkish communications along Hejaz Railway between Amman and Medina.

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# CAMPAIGNS AND THEIR LESSONS

## THE PALESTINE CAMPAIGNS

### INTRODUCTORY

#### CHAPTER I

##### THE ELEMENTS OF THE CAMPAIGNS

“And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon.”—Revelations xvi. 16.

1. *The Topography of the Theatre of War.*—Historical associations—The Sinai Peninsula—The features of Palestine—Syria—Harbours, railways and roads of the theatre of war—Turkish lines of communication—Attitude of the population and political considerations.

2. *The Relations of the Campaigns to the War as a Whole.*—The objectives of the campaigns—The influence of sea power—Germany and Turkey.

3. *The Turkish Army.*—Qualities of the Turkish soldier—Organisation and strength of the army.

(SEE MAP I.)

#### 1. *The Topography of the Theatre of War*

THE campaigns in Sinai, Palestine and Syria were fought along one of the world's oldest and greatest highways, the main route between the earliest known cradles of civilisation, the valleys of the Euphrates and of the Nile. From Egypt its course keeps close to the sea while passing over the inhospitable desert of Sinai; thence it runs up the fertile plains of Philistia and Sharon, leaving the high rocky fortress of Judæa to the east; crosses the Carmel Range by a low pass to the plain of Esdrælon or Megiddo; ascends past the Sea of Galilee to the plateau east of the Jordan; and so on to Damascus and Aleppo, whence the Euphrates Valley can be followed to Baghdad. Along this great road the tides of thought, of trade, and of war have flowed between Africa and Asia since the dawn of history. It is well called by the

Arabs "*Darab es Sultani*"—the Royal Road. Almost every name studded along that highway awakens a memory of some famous chieftain or of some noted deed. Gaza and Gath lie on it, cities of that strange people, the Philistines, who disappeared from history as mysteriously as they entered it. Romani (the ancient Pelusium) was the scene of a great battle between Persian and Egyptian 2,500 years ago. Arsuf recalls a fierce afternoon struggle between Richard Cœur de Lion and his illustrious adversary Saladin. Caesarea was named by a great ruler, Herod, after his greater patron, Augustus. From Acre Napoleon withdrew baffled for the first time in his career. The cities of Damascus and Aleppo have been from earliest days the great marts and emporiums of Eastern trade; the skill of the craftsmen of Damascus in the weaving of fabrics, in the making of weapons, and in the goldsmith's handiwork is commemorated to-day by words in common use in those arts.\*

The great plain of Esdraelon, the traditional site of Armageddon, lies half-way between Egypt and Aleppo. It has seen many wars and many warriors. From Mount Tabor a wild rush of mountain men destroyed Sisera's labouring host in the swampy plain below—much as the modern Pathan might swoop on a column in difficulties with its transport. More than three thousand years ago a host of irregular tribesmen camped in the plain fled in sudden panic from Gideon's three hundred well-disciplined and well-schooled warriors in the first night attack of which we have a detailed description.† A little further to the north the fierce heat of a July day saw the doom of the Crusaders' short-lived kingdom, when Saladin's horsemen attacked under cover of a smoke screen created by firing the scrub in the face of the Christian Knights. Here, too, Napoleon's cavalry drove back the Turks, while their leader was battering at Acre. Assyrian, Egyptian, Persian, Macedonian, Roman and Arab, all the

\* *Damask*, *Damascus* steel and *amascening* are all derived from the city of Damascus.

† See Judges vii. The main principles underlying Gideon's plan of action—his selection of disciplined men, careful reconnaissance and preparation, use of moral effect—are as necessary for success in a night operation to-day as they were in his time.

great conquering nations have passed this way. It is fitting that in the greatest war of history this strip of ground should have witnessed the master stroke of a sweeping victory in which practically every race of the British Empire took part.

No apology is needed for the mention of events so far distant as those briefly catalogued in this introduction to a theatre of war that might well be termed the cockpit of nations. If the principles of war were not immutable, and therefore to be learnt from the experience of the past, there would be little need of books on military history. The geography of a land determines the course of its wars, and a knowledge of previous campaigns serves to interpret the influence on strategy of the land's main topographical features. Certainly no commander ever gave more careful study to the history and topography of the theatre in which he was operating than did General Allenby. Two books he consulted almost daily, the Bible and George Adam Smith's "Historical Geography of the Holy Land." Nor was it only the natural interest aroused in an acute and exceptionally well-informed mind that impelled him to reflect so often on the past of the land. From those reflections he deduced much that was of value to him in planning his operations.

The ancient highway followed by the troops of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force from the Suez Canal to Aleppo—a distance of well over five hundred miles—led them to traverse a remarkable variety of soil and scenery—the arid desert of Sinai, the fertile plains of Palestine, the bleak rocky hills of Judæa, the sweltering trench of the Jordan Valley, and finally the cultivated uplands of Syria. A short description of the chief physical features of the theatre and an estimate of their military influence follows under three heads: Sinai, Palestine, and Syria. More detailed information concerning those areas, which came to be the scene of the main operations, will be given in their appropriate place. It is, however, of importance to fix in mind at once the geographical considerations that decided the broad lines on which the campaigns developed.



the construction of the Suez Canal has contracted the desert by some fifty miles since Napoléon's time. The frontier incident of 1906 at Akaba led the General Staff at the War Office to reconsider the problem of Egypt's Eastern frontier. They then concluded that the desert was by no means an impassable obstacle to a modern army, but they estimated the maximum force that conditions of water supply would permit to approach the Canal at 5,000 men and 2,000 camels. This proved to be an underestimate. But the crossing of the peninsula was quite obviously an undertaking which could be accomplished only after serious preparation and organisation.

The exact extent of country designated by the name *Palestine* has varied at different periods. It will here be taken to include the territory from Dan to Beersheba and from the Mediterranean to the Hejaz Railway, that is, approximately the same area as is covered by the present British mandated territory of Palestine and by the Arab kingdom of Transjordan. It is a small country. From Dan (Banias) to Beersheba is one hundred and fifty miles, from the Mediterranean at Jaffa to the Hejaz Railway at Amman seventy-five miles.† Yet it is so divided by its remarkable physical features as to present the most sudden variations of terrain and of climate; \* indeed, so parcelled out is this small land that it has never been united under one rule, save as a province of some conquering alien, such as Roman or Turk. Its salient physical features are two mountain ranges, separated by the most extraordinary crack in the earth's surface, and a strip of fertile plain between the western range and the sea. The eastern range, the Mountains of Moab (3,000–3,500 feet), sinks down gradually to the desert on the east and abruptly to the Jordan on the west. The other range, the Judæan Hills, is the real backbone of the region. It also falls steeply to the Jordan, whereas on the Mediterranean side its descent to the coastal plain is more

† The total area of Palestine as thus defined is rather less than that of Wales.

\* Witness for instance the feat of Benaiah, who slew a lion in a snow-storm! (II. Samuel, xxiii. 20.)

gradual. Between the two ranges runs the valley of the Jordan, 7 feet below sea level at Lake Huleh, 680 feet below at Lake Tiberias only ten miles to the south, and 1,300 feet below at the Dead Sea sixty-five miles further on.\* The dissection of the country is completed by two depressions running east and west, the one large and obvious, the other less noticeable, though it marks a very distinct change in the character of the country. The great depression is the Plain of Esdrælon, continued eastwards by the Yarmuk Valley; the lesser is that between Samaria and Judæa, which may be defined by a line drawn from the sea to the Jordan following the River Auja (north of Jaffa), the Wadis Deir Ballut, En Nimr, and Es Samieh, and another river, also called Auja, which flows into the Jordan eight miles north of Jericho.† This was, as will be seen, the line aimed at and secured by General Allenby after the capture of Jerusalem, and held during the summer of 1918 up to the final advance.

For consideration of its military properties the Palestine theatre may, then, be subdivided into :—

- (a) The Maritime Plain and Plain of Esdrælon ;
- (b) The Judæan Hills ;
- (c) The Jordan Valley ;
- (d) Transjordania.

(a) *The Plain Country—Philistia, Sharon and Esdrælon.*—These plains, as we have already seen, form the natural and historical route for great armies. The coast line is fringed by a strip of sand dunes, varying in width from a few hundred yards up to half a mile, and rising in places to a height of 150 feet above sea level. Inland from the sand hills the plain stretches for some ten to fifteen miles to the foot hills of the main Judæan Range; it is gently undulating and intersected with numerous small wadis. From April to June it is under crops. In the dry season there are no serious obstacles to military movement along this plain from Gaza to Galilee, save one small stream, the Auja, north of

\* This depression is continued south as far as Akaba on the Red Sea, but there is a watershed between the Dead Sea and Akaba.

† See Map VIII.

Jaffa, and that low spur of the main range which divides Sharon from Esdrælon and ends near Haifa in Mount Carmel.

The Auja above mentioned and the "brook Kishon" in the plain of Esdrælon are almost the only perennial streams of running water. Local needs for the normal population are amply met from deep wells, but these are inadequate for the requirements of an army, without special machinery and development.

The plain land of Palestine is on the whole healthy, though special precautions against malaria are necessary. The summer is hot, but not unbearably so. The *Khamsin* winds are, however, most oppressive and provoke an intolerable thirst.

The chief feature of the climate is its division into a dry and a rainy season. The regular rainy season lasts from November to March, but there is also a little rain at the end of October (the "former rains" of the Bible), and in late March and April (the "latter rains"). Between April and October there is practically never even a shower. During the rainy season large tracts of the plain land become a sea of mud, and the roads are often impassable.\* That phrase in the Bible—"the time of the year when Kings go forth to battle"—need puzzle no one who has seen Palestine at the height of the rainy season; it is then impossible for either kings or lesser men to go forth to battle with any comfort or profit.

(b) *Judæan Hills*.—The Judæan Range consists of a narrow table-land at an average height of 2,400 feet (its highest points run up to approximately 3,500 feet) with frequent spurs shooting east and west at right angles to the main ridge. It has thus been compared to the skeleton of a flat fish. The direction of the spurs, between which run deep wadis, renders the traverse of an army along the range from north to south, or *vice versâ*, a formidable undertaking in face of any opposition. The northern portion of the range, Samaria, is more open and fertile than the remainder. In winter the weather may be for days at a time extremely

\* Cf. I. Kings, xviii. 44, where Elijah says to Ahab: "Prepare thy chariot and get thee down, that the rain stop thee not."

bleak and cold ; but on the whole there are few better or healthier climates than that of Judæa. The annual rainfall at Jerusalem is approximately the same as in London ; but it is all concentrated into the five months of the rainy season, and few means exist for storing the water, which runs rapidly off. Consequently the problem of watering a large army in the hills during the summer is a serious one.

In 1914 only two roads fit for wheels crossed the range, one from north to south—by Nazareth, Nablus, Jerusalem, Hebron to Beersheba—one from east to west—by Jericho, Jerusalem, Jaffa. Operations in the Judæan Range were bound to be slow against an active enemy, in view of the limited means of communication and the facilities given to the defender by the broken nature of the ground. It was obvious that the main battles were likely to be pitched in the plain below.

(c) *The Jordan Valley*.—History shows the Jordan Valley and the Dead Sea acting as a serious barrier to passage between the Judæan Range and the Mountains of Moab. The river, though its course is rapid and its banks often swampy and overgrown, seldom exceeds 70 or 80 feet in breadth, and has many fords. It is not, therefore, in itself, a particularly formidable obstacle. But the steepness of the descent from and ascent to the mountains on either side, the poverty of the communications, and the forbidding aspect and sweltering heat of the deeply-cleft valley, have combined to restrict intercourse between the inhabitants of the two hill ranges. It has been the same with military hosts. Since the irruption of Israel into their promised land, there is little record of the movement of armies on this face of the Judæan fortress. Yet in 1918 General Allenby's troops, by their two raids across the Jordan and their endurance of a long summer in the tropical heat of the valley, actually persuaded the Turk that the main effort of the army would be made across the Jordan.

(d) *Transjordania*.—The table-land east of the Jordan carries the railway from Damascus to the Hejaz, from which the Turkish line of communication to Palestine branched off at Deraa Junction. This fact gave it a considerable military



importance during the campaigns. The railway, and indeed the whole of Transjordan, lies open to raid from the desert, a form of attack difficult to counter, as the Turks found to their cost.

The country here termed *Syria* is roughly that lying between the Mediterranean and the desert, from Aleppo in the north to Galilee in the south.\* The double wall of mountain characteristic of Palestine is continued into Syria. Thus the Judæan Hills have, as their counterpart in Syria, a much loftier series of ranges which stretch along the coast right up to the Taurus Mountains; the most southern of these is the range of the Lebanons. The western slopes of these Syrian mountains come down close to the sea, leaving only a very narrow strip of plain at their foot. The eastern chain, the continuation northwards of the Mountains of Moab, is formed by Mount Hermon and the Anti-Lebanon. Enclosed between them and the Lebanon is the fertile valley of El Bekaa (Coele-Syria), which is geologically the beginning of the Jordan rift. The southern slopes of Hermon descend to the Hauran plateau, a great wheat-producing district, at the eastern edge of which lies the Jebel Druz, home of a strange and turbulent people. North of the Anti-Lebanon, about Homs, the eastern range sinks to a broad plateau running north-east to the Euphrates. From Homs to Aleppo the ground is open and level. Syria is a more fertile region than Palestine; it is irrigated by several large streams, and the difficulties of water supply to a large force are much less. The climate is similar to that of Palestine.

Such is in outline the general topographical configuration of the theatre of war. To the commander of an army of invasion, studying the character of the country he had to traverse, the most striking features would appear to be the remarkable variety of terrain and climate that he would meet, the seriousness of the water difficulties, the probable influence of the rainy season on his operations, and (in 1915 and 1916) the lack of good maps.† There would still remain

\* Strictly speaking, the term Syria includes also Palestine.

† The best map available was the survey made by Lord Kitchener in 1878 when a subaltern in the R.E. It was excellent as far as it went, but the detail was not always sufficiently accurate for tactical purposes.

for his attention the most vital consideration to commanders of large armies, the adequacy or otherwise of the existing means of communication, by sea, by road and by railway, to support his projected movements. This subject will be examined in the succeeding pages.

(a) *Sea Communications*.—The long coast line of Syria and Palestine has been singularly neglected by nature in the provision of harbours. Syria has two small ones at Alexandretta and Beirut, but neither is really satisfactory. Haifa, though a fair anchorage, has no facilities as a port. South of Haifa the coast stretches to Egypt in a line unbroken by a single headland or inlet sufficient to serve as shelter for sea-going vessels. Jaffa, the only place with any pretensions to be called a port, is merely an open roadstead, where landing is often most precarious. There have been in history many attempts to build harbours in Palestine, but none have proved successful. The coast is, says Adam Smith, "strewn with the wreckage of harbours." \* Consequently Palestine has never yet been successfully invaded by the sea. The strong currents and constant surf make the landing of men or stores on the open beach a difficult task, liable to interruption for days at a time. This fact proved in the campaign a serious handicap to the supply services of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force.

(b) *Railways*.—The railways existing in Palestine and Syria at the outbreak of war were as shown in the table on p. 11, from north to south.

The existence of three different gauges will be noted. There was, however, through communication from Aleppo to Afule, with a break of gauge at Rayak.

(c) *Roads*.—Few metalled roads existed either in Syria or Palestine; but many tracks were passable for wheeled transport, including heavy motor transport, during the dry season; the wet season was a severe handicap to movement, especially of motor transport.

It will be convenient here to give an account of the Turkish lines of communication to the Palestine front, since on their working the fortunes of the campaign largely

\* "Historical Geography of the Holy Land," Chapter VII.

depended. They were peculiarly complicated, and presented great difficulties of organisation—never the strong point of the Turk.

Haidar Pasha, on the eastern shore of the Bosphorus opposite Constantinople, was the starting point of the Baghdad Railway, and the main base of the Turkish forces both in Palestine and in Mesopotamia. Up to Muslimie Junction, north of Aleppo, the same single-line track, of standard gauge, had to serve both theatres. In 1914 the

Railway.	Gauge.	Length in Miles.
I. Muslimie (just north of Aleppo, junction with Baghdad Railway)—Aleppo—Homs—Rayak	Standard	200
II. Homs—Tripoli . . . . .	do.	40
III. Beirut — Rayak — Damascus — Mezerib.	1·05 m. (3 ft. 6 in.)	150
IV. Damascus — Deraa — Amman—Maan—Medina (Hejaz Railway)	1·05 m.	850
V. Deraa — Mezerib — Yarmuk Valley — Afule — Haifa (Branch of Hejaz Railway) . .	1·05 m.	100
VI. Afule — Sileh (Branch of Hejaz Railway, under construction towards Nablus) . . . . .	1·05 m.	25
VII. Jaffa—Jerusalem . . . . .	1·00 m.	45

line was interrupted in two places. Neither through the Taurus Range (about Bozanti Khan, north-west of Adana) nor through the Amanus Range (north-west of Aleppo) were the tunnels complete. All stores and personnel had therefore to cross these two ranges by road. In the winter the state of the roads, particularly of that over the Amanus Range, often caused prolonged interruption. Later in the campaign the tunnels were sufficiently pierced to allow narrow-gauge lines to be laid and used through them; but the Taurus tunnel was only finally completed for broad gauge, so as to permit through trains, a very short time before the armistice

in November, 1918.\* Thus throughout the greater part of the war four transshipments were necessary between Haidar Pasha and Aleppo, and much valuable motor and animal transport was locked up in the business of portage over the mountain passes. The next section—from Aleppo to Rayak—was a straightforward one, with no difficulties beyond the perpetual shortage of fuel and rolling stock. But at Rayak a break of gauge necessitated a fifth transshipment. From Rayak through Damascus and Deraa (up to which point supplies for the troops in the Hejaz had to be carried over the same line), was the pre-war single-track metre-gauge line, which extended to within a short distance of Nablus. Between Deraa and Afule, where it passed down the Yarmuk Valley, a number of important bridges and tunnels rendered the line very vulnerable to attack by raid or sabotage. The Turks took immediate steps, when war was declared, to push this line south towards the Palestine frontier, employing Meissner Pasha, the engineer of the Hejaz Railway. The trace followed was through Tulkeram and thence down the Maritime Plain to Ludd, keeping at a safe distance from the sea to prevent any possibility of a raid by landing parties. From Ludd the track of the Jaffa—Jerusalem line was used as far as Junction station,† whence it was directed on Beersheba, which it reached in October, 1915. To provide sleepers and material for this extension, the line from Jaffa to Ludd was torn up, and also that portion of the Beirut line, from Damascus to Mezerib, which duplicated the Hejaz line. In 1915–16, during the Turkish efforts to reach the Canal, the Beersheba line was extended to El Auja on the Sinai border; and in 1917 a branch line was constructed from south of Junction station to Gaza.

In addition to the great length of these communications (approximately 1,275 miles from Haidar Pasha to the Palestine front at Gaza and Beersheba) and the five transshipments, shortage of rolling stock and fuel were constant sources of trouble. There were no proper workshops, so

\* Some of the British prisoners from Kut were employed on these tunnels. It is said that they contrived to damage in one way or another every German aeroplane which passed through on its way to the Palestine front.

† A slight alteration of gauge was necessary.

that the repair of locomotives and wagons could not keep pace with requirements. Within a short period of the opening of war, the sea blockade effectively prevented any replenishment of coal stocks ; so that wood fuel had to be used, with great loss of power. Even wood was eventually difficult to obtain. Turkish inefficiency and corruption enhanced the confusion on the communications, against which the German staffs found themselves powerless. Hence it normally required at least a month to six weeks for reinforcements to pass from Constantinople to the front line. Sometimes, when the railways were congested, reinforcements marched from Rayak to Southern Palestine, a distance of 250 miles.

Two factors which had some influence on the design of the campaigns need a brief mention here, though they do not form part of the topography of the theatre. The first is the attitude towards either belligerent of the populations of Egypt, Sinai, Palestine and Syria. Of Egypt, it will suffice to say that the Turk greatly over-estimated the likelihood of the Egyptian taking any active measures to throw off the over-lordship of Great Britain and to resume that of Turkey. So far as was possible the Egyptian people as a whole strictly disinterested themselves from the war.\* The Bedouin of Sinai, again, were concerned merely to extract profit to themselves, by service as guides or as spies to the nearest, or best, paymaster, or by entirely impartial looting, whenever opportunity offered. The inhabitants of Syria and Palestine, though long under Turkish domination, felt no enthusiasm for Turkey or her cause, except such bodies as the German settlements in Palestine. Certainly in the later stages of the war the attitude of the inhabitants generally was more favourable to the invading British armies than to the Turk. The people of the Hejaz and large numbers of the tribes in the Arabian desert declared openly for the Allied cause, as will be shown later.

The importance attached by the Allied Governments to certain purely political considerations was the second factor.

\* There was, of course, agitation in favour of the Turk and unrest amongst a certain section of the population, but it was not at this time general.

This is not the place to discuss the various pledges—not strictly reconcilable with each other—by which our Government bound itself successively to the Arabs (treaty with King Hussein), to France (the Sykes-Picot Agreement), and to the Jewish world (the Balfour declaration). But the existence of these pledges, the traditional claims of France to influence in Syria, and the position of Jerusalem as a holy place of three great religions, had all to receive their due weight, and added to the cares and anxieties of a Commander-in-Chief.

## *2. The Relation of the Campaigns to the War as a Whole*

The campaigns of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force have been frequently termed a “side show.” If this expression is intended to imply that the campaigns were planned and executed independently of the march of events in the main theatre of war in Europe or in the other theatres, it is certainly misapplied. To give its true perspective to the warfare in Sinai, Palestine and Syria, it is necessary to regard the battle-line of Great Britain and her Allies as a single one, which eventually extended across Belgium, France, Italy, the Balkans, the Mediterranean, the Eastern border of Egypt, Arabia and Mesopotamia, even to the frontiers of India; and to consider the war as one continuous battle, fought on the accepted principles of the pre-war Field Service Regulations, only lasting for years instead of days, and spread over hundreds of miles instead of thousands of yards. A great battle, as contemplated by Field Service Regulations, normally comprised three phases. The first phase was the collision of the advanced troops, under cover of which the rival commanders developed their plan of action, while their armies gradually deployed their full strength. Our Regular Army—British and Indian—may be viewed in this analogy as the advanced guard, which covered the development by the British nation of its full fighting strength—a process which occupied nearly the whole of the first two years of the war. The second phase, when battle had been fairly joined by the main forces, was the struggle to obtain fire superiority and to exhaust the enemy’s reserves in preparation for the final attack. In the

war, this phase may be said to have lasted during the latter part of 1916 and all 1917. The third phase, the decisive great attack or counter-attack and the exploitation of success, once the enemy's line has broken, occupied the year 1918.

Though possibly never so formulated, a conception of the war something like the foregoing must have existed in the minds of those responsible for Imperial strategy as a whole. And the picture may help the readers of this book to understand the strategical ideas underlying the instructions from the War Cabinet in London, which formed the basis of these campaigns of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force. The campaigns, too, do actually, as it happens, fall very conveniently into three periods—Sinai, Palestine, Syria—corresponding generally with the three phases of a battle just outlined.

The original object of our maintaining a force in Egypt at all was quite simple and definite. Its role was that of a detachment guarding a vital main line of communication. The reasons for the subsequent adoption of an offensive policy will appear in the course of the narrative. The three main influences leading up to it may, however, here be summarised briefly. In the first place, a scheme of protection which involved holding the Suez Canal throughout its whole length of one hundred miles was obviously wasteful of troops; and an advance to the southern borders of Palestine was found the most effective and economical means of defence. Secondly, events in other theatres of war reacted on the strategy in Palestine and impelled a forward policy. Thirdly, certain considerations, which were political rather than strategical, had at times a considerable influence.

It may be argued that if offensive action against the Turkish armies in Syria and Palestine became necessary, sea power could have provided a quicker and more effective means of striking than the long land campaign actually undertaken. It certainly does seem strange at first sight that the greatest sea power in history should have sent its armies from Egypt to Aleppo by a march of over 500 miles, when its goal lay distant from a sea port only some seventy-five miles. But the reasons are really not far to seek. Aleppo

did not become an objective until a very late stage of the war. When the force first set out from the Canal, it intended only to secure control of the Sinai desert ; the development of its mission into that of administering the *coup de grace* to the Ottoman Empire was a very gradual process. Moreover, the potentialities of combined naval and military action in this theatre of war were limited by several circumstances. The lack of harbours and the insecurity of landing operations on the shores of Syria and Palestine have already been indicated. In any case the growth of modern armies and the bulkiness of some of their indispensable equipment, such as heavy guns and lorries, seem to set a limit to the expediency of landing operations, except as a prelude to the seizure of a well-equipped port as base. Further, submarines were a very real menace in the Mediterranean, and were even more difficult to combat than in home waters. We did, as all know, endeavour to use our naval power against Turkey at the beginning of the war, in fact to administer a knockout blow in the first round by forcing the Dardanelles. The failure of that venture was not calculated to encourage landing operations elsewhere. Yet our command of the sea was in other ways an important asset in the Palestine campaigns. In addition to the material help afforded by warships in battles on the coast within range of their guns, and by store-ships in landing large quantities of bulky supplies at various stages of the advance, the moral effect of sea power was invaluable. It immobilised an appreciable number of Turkish units and of long-range guns for shore protection ; it forced on the Turkish railways in Southern Palestine a longer and more difficult inland trace than would otherwise have been necessary ; and it assisted General Allenby in the third battle of Gaza to deceive the Turk as to his real line of attack. It was ships of the Royal Navy which on several occasions brought timely succour and comfort to the Arab revolt in the Hejaz. Finally, it may be noted that our sea communications with Great Britain and India, in spite of their great length, actually gave us an advantage in point of time over the inefficient rail communications between Constantinople and the front line.



To turn to the Turkish side of the picture. Though it was not known to our Government at the time, Turkey had in fact bound herself to Germany by treaty before the first shot was fired in Europe; and her three months of nominal neutrality between August and November, 1914, were spent in preparation for the moment when Germany should give the signal for action.\* The terms of the pact have not been disclosed, but Turkey was no doubt promised territorial aggrandisement at the expense of Russia in the Caucasus and probably of the unfortunate but powerless Persia in Azerbaijan. She may also have been encouraged to hope for a restoration of her sovereignty over Egypt, though it is unlikely that Germany would have permitted the real control to have escaped her own hands. Germany certainly must have persuaded the adventurers who ruled Turkey—Enver, Talaat and Djemal—that they were “coming in on an absolute certainty,” otherwise the policy of Turkey in joining in the war was suicidally rash. She had little to gain and much to lose.† Her finances, her warlike stores and her reserves of man power had been drained by a succession of wars. She was thus dependent on Germany for money and munitions, and had to pay the price by submitting to German dictation of her strategy and to a large measure of German control in the management and direction of her armies. The partnership was never a happy one. The Turks chafed at German interference, often tactlessly exercised, and by passive resistance nullified much German endeavour to substitute order for confusion; the Germans in their turn were exasperated by the inefficiency and inertia of their allies. From the first the strategical aims of the two countries were at variance. Apart from the short life-and-death

\* See Chap. XVII. of Winston Churchill's “The World Crisis” (abridged and revised edition).

† But the Turk has always been unaccountable. A former British ambassador to Turkey summed him up as follows: “When you wish to know what a Turkish official is likely to do, first consider what it would be to his interest to do; next, what any other man would do in similar circumstances; and thirdly, what everyone expects him to do. When you have ascertained these, you are so far advanced on your road that you may be perfectly certain that he will not adopt any of these courses.”

struggle in Gallipoli, Turkey was constantly engaged on three fronts—in the Caucasus against Russia, and in Palestine and Iraq against Great Britain. Of these three the Caucasus theatre was to Turkish minds the most important; it was nearest to the Anatolian core of their Empire, and it was where they most desired and expected territorial expansion. The Germans on the other hand, looked askance at the Turkish efforts against Russia, which could bring little advantage to the Central Powers in their principal struggle; they were continually endeavouring to divert the main weight of their ally's troops to other objectives. In the latter half of 1916, the pick of the Turkish Army was actually serving at the bidding of an imperious partner on the Russian and Rumanian fronts in Europe, while the Asiatic theatres were left to look after themselves. Thus there was continual friction.

The two principal advantages which the Germans hoped to gain from the Turkish alliance were probably the closing of the Dardanelles between Russia and her allies, and the embarrassment of Great Britain with her large Mohammedan population by the declared hostility of the head of Islam. But the *jihad* proclaimed in November, 1914, had little effect, and measures were taken to deal with German propaganda in Moslem countries.

Given even moderately good communications, the geographical position of Turkey should have conferred on her the advantage of interior lines in regard to her three Asiatic fronts. But the communications were thoroughly inadequate. The defects of the line to the Palestine front have already been catalogued. And the lines to the other fronts were worse than those to Palestine. Not even German organisation succeeded in removing this handicap.

NOTE.—The Turks must have “contained” much larger numbers of their adversaries than they themselves put in the field, and in this respect must have been a most useful ally to the Germans. Figures are dangerous, but the following *rough estimate of available rifles* gives some idea of the comparative strengths of the Turks and the Allies in the principal theatres in the latter part of the war :

	August, 1917.		August, 1918.		(of very little fighting value).
	Turks.	Allies.	Turks.	Allies.	
Caucasus .	64,000	123,500	56,000	160,000	
Palestine .	36,000	96,000	36,000	100,000	
Mesopotamia .	35,000	85,000	22,000	100,000	

### 3. *The Turkish Army*

"The sword had been the virtue of the children of Othman, and swords had passed out of fashion nowadays, in favour of deadlier and more scientific weapons. Life was growing too complicated for this child-like people, whose strength had lain in simplicity, and patience, and in their capacity for sacrifice."— ("Seven Pillars of Wisdom.")

The Turkish Empire as it existed in 1914 contained a heterogeneous mixture of races and creeds, including—besides Turks—Arabs, Armenians, Kurds, Syrians and others. The Anatolian Turk was the backbone of the Empire. He is a fine soldier of the rough-and-ready type, with extraordinary powers of endurance, great patience under hardships and privations, a certain inherited aptitude for warfare, and stolid courage in battle. These are, and always will be, high military virtues. But the exigencies of modern war demand also great technical skill to handle complex weapons and equipment, and the moral staying power that only a high level of education can give. Of these qualities the uneducated, illiterate Turkish peasant was entirely deficient. A large proportion of the officers could barely read or write. The technical equipment of the army was completely out of date.

The experience of the Balkan War against Bulgaria and Serbia in 1912 had shown the many defects in Turkey's military administration; this war had also cost her serious casualties, which fell on the best fighting elements of her population. After her defeat she turned once more to Germany for help to modernise her military methods. The Germans, who had in the past supplied many instructors to the Turkish Army, now sent, towards the end of 1913, General Liman von Sanders as head of a military mission of some seventy German officers to regenerate the Turkish

forces. He had little time to effect any marked change before the outbreak of the European War.\*

In August, 1914, the Turkish Army comprised thirty-six divisions, all much below establishment. During the war thirty-four other divisions were formed,† but since heavy losses frequently caused disbandments, there were at no time more than forty-three divisions in the field. A division normally consisted of three regiments (each of three battalions and a machine gun detachment), a rifle battalion, from twenty-four to thirty-six field guns, and ancillary services. In practice divisions varied greatly in strength. An Army Corps contained two or three divisions. There were grave deficiencies in heavy artillery, technical units, transport and supply services, medical personnel and equipment. There was no effective air service. These deficiencies the Germans set themselves to remedy. Until Bulgaria had joined the Central Powers and Serbia had been overrun, difficulties of communication hampered the supply of munitions to Turkey; Germany's own needs, too, were urgent. Eventually, the Germans supplied the equipment and the majority of the personnel for the air arm, signals, mechanical transport and other technical services, besides sending a few infantry battalions. The Austrians contributed some heavy artillery and medical personnel. The Germans also aimed more and more as the war went on to arrogate to themselves the principal staff appointments in the Turkish armies, and to control the working of the railways. It was their claims and pretensions in these two spheres that aroused most friction, since many of the Germans were overbearing and tactless. The abundance of the rations, clothing, and other comforts on which the Germans insisted for their own units, however congested might be the lines of communication, contrasted too sharply

\* Liman von Sanders was never on good terms with the vain and obstinate Enver, who seems usually to have disregarded his wholesome advice. But Liman von Sanders himself was obviously no diplomat, since he seems to have been constantly at loggerheads, not only with the Turkish authorities, but also with the German officials in Constantinople.

† Some of these (the "Caucasus" divisions) were formed by amalgamation of existing divisions.

with the frequent shortage of food and necessities in the Turkish units not to cause discontent. Further, the Germans, for all their efficiency, never seem to have appreciated the idiosyncrasies of the fighting methods of their allies. They frequently ordered counter-attacks or movements requiring a promptness of action and a precision of manœuvre unknown to the Turks, with consequent failure and mutual recrimination. All things considered, the Germans put almost as much grit as oil into the military machine.

The Turks are said to have called up and enrolled as many as 2,700,000 men in the war, a very large percentage of the available military population. Yet so heavy were the losses, and so large the number of desertions, that the maximum strength of the army was probably never more than 650,000. The true Anatolian Turk, in spite of short rations, poor equipment, and a complete ignorance of the causes and objects of the war, retained his morale, and fought well to the end. But amongst the other races, which had to be drawn on increasingly as the war was prolonged, disaffection was rife, and desertion very frequent.

In spite of all the defects of his organisation, the Turk was an enemy by no means to be despised. He was a fine marcher, and could dispense with many of the impedimenta necessary to European armies. On the defensive, his eye for ground, his skill in planning and entrenching a position, and his stubbornness in holding it made him a really formidable adversary to engage. In the offensive he always attacked gallantly though often with little skill. The Turkish artilleryman handled his guns well and shot accurately; but the cavalry were poorly mounted and seldom effective.

On the value to be assigned to the Turk as a fighting man depends largely the worth of the tactical lessons to be drawn from these campaigns. That he had not the military qualities of the German is, of course, obvious; but that he must stand high on any list of the martial nations of the world is equally true.\* The British Army certainly cannot belittle the men

\* The writer has occasionally amused himself by making a handicap—on the lines of a golf handicap—of all the nations which took part in the late war, according to their martial qualities. He has found that the Turk

who forced them to abandon the Gallipoli enterprise, who captured a complete division at Kut, who crossed the Sinai desert to the Suez Canal, and who checked the first two onslaughts at Gaza.

H. S. Gullett, in the "Australian Official History," Vol. VII., has caught the likeness of the Turkish soldier well. He says: "Such conditions would have been fatal to the spirit and fighting capacity of any European troops engaged in a similar campaign. But the Turk as a fighter is unlike any other soldier in the world. Even when he is wretchedly fed and miserably equipped . . . he will continue month after month and year after year a dangerous foe to troops of a higher civilisation fighting under the happiest conditions. No set of circumstances, however depressing, appears able to diminish his dogged resistance, while if the opportunity is propitious he can always be stirred to the offensive."

NOTE.—The Turkish numbers at any given period or engagement are very difficult to arrive at. To the difficulty, well known to all soldiers, of distinguishing between "ration," "combatant," and "rifle" strengths, are added the Turkish neglect to obtain and record accurate returns, and the natural tendency of a defeated force to minimise its numbers. The strengths given in this volume are based on the most probable estimate available, but can never be regarded as a strictly accurate figure. The "Official History of the Mesopotamian Campaign" says on this point (Volume I., Chapter II., p. 26): "The numbers and armament of the Turkish forces at any fixed time cannot be estimated with entire accuracy; their own figures obtained during and after the war are often unreliable; . . . casualties were frequently not reported; and fraudulent returns were not unknown."

is usually set to receive five or six strokes from the nation placed at scratch. On mentioning this to a distinguished officer, the latter replied that his handicap was always on racing lines, and that the Turk carried about 8 st. 12 lbs. when top weight was 9 st. 7 lbs.

# THE FIRST PHASE—SINAI

## CHAPTER II

### THE DEFENCE OF THE SUEZ CANAL

1. *First Turkish Attack.*—Outbreak of war with Turkey—Suez Canal—Turkish preparations and advance—Attack on the Canal—Comments.

2. *The Western Desert Campaign.*—Egypt in 1915—Operations against the Senussi—Comments.

3. *Second Turkish Attack on the Canal.*—General situation during winter of 1915–16—Construction of defensive line east of Canal—Sir Archibald Murray's proposals for advance to El Arish—Action of Katia—Battle of Romani—Comments.

4. *Arab Revolt in the Hejaz.*

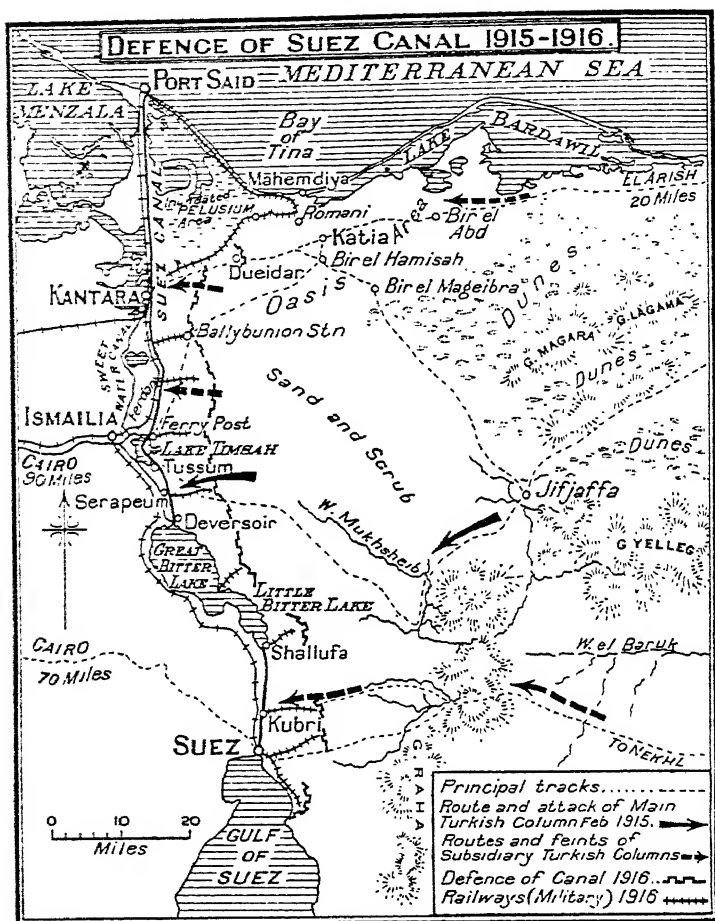
(SEE MAPS II., III., IV., V.)

#### 1. *The First Turkish Attack*

TURKEY had begun the mobilisation of her armies on August 2nd, 1914, alleging the measure to be a simple act of precaution. That Turkey was already in fact pledged to Germany by treaty was not at this time known to our Government. During the succeeding three months, however, the spurious nature of Turkey's pretended neutrality became increasingly obvious, and by the end of October her attitude was frankly hostile. Diplomatic relations were broken off on October 30th. The official declaration of war was made on November 5th, 1914.

Turkey's entry into the war created new, though not unforeseen, problems and perils for Russia and Great Britain. The former saw the Dardanelles closed as a means of communication with her Allies, and was forced to strengthen her defence in the Caucasus. For Great Britain the points of danger were the oilfields in South Persia, of such importance to the Navy, and the Suez Canal. No risks were taken with either of these vital responsibilities. On November 6th, a division from India landed at the mouth

of the Shatt el Arab.\* By November 22nd it was in possession of Basra, and by December 9th it had occupied





had been earmarked for withdrawal to the Western front as soon as it could be relieved. To replace it a Territorial division was selected, the 42nd (East Lancashire)—fine material, but only partly trained. It arrived in Egypt at the end of September. But as news came in of Turkish concentrations in Palestine and Syria, and the menace of hostilities with Turkey drew nearer, the immediate need for fully-trained troops became apparent. In the middle of September a brigade of infantry (9th Sirhind Brigade) and a brigade of mountain artillery were retained temporarily out of the 3rd Indian Division as it passed through to France.\* In the middle of November a force from India arrived to release the 9th Brigade. It had also been decided to disembark the first Australian and New Zealand contingents in Egypt to complete their training in a more favourable climate than that of an English winter. The leading units disembarked at Alexandria early in December. Thus by the end of 1914 Egypt had a considerable garrison, although only a proportion of it was fully trained.

Major-General Sir John Maxwell had taken over the command early in September from Major-General Sir Julian Byng (now Lord Byng) who proceeded to France. His intimate knowledge of Egypt and of the Egyptians and his talents as an administrator were invaluable at this period. The outbreak of war provoked awkward questions of our political relation to Egypt. The position was admittedly illogical; Egypt nominally acknowledged the suzerainty of the Sultan of Turkey by payment of an annual tribute; Great Britain had in fact governed the country for the past thirty-two years. The situation was complicated in August, 1914, by the absence in Constantinople of the nominal ruler, the Khedive, Abbas Hilmi Pasha, an avowed opponent of the British. The safety of the Suez Canal was of such importance to the British Empire at war that military and political control of Egypt had to be retained in some shape or other. The Egyptian Ministry was therefore, on August 5th, induced to issue a declaration, the practical effect of

\* Some of the transports which brought the 9th Brigade from India took the peace garrison of Egypt on to England.

which was to place the country in a state of war against the enemies of Great Britain. On November 2nd, after Turkey had entered the war, martial law was proclaimed. On December 18th, Great Britain declared a Protectorate over Egypt, and on the 19th the Khedive was deposed and his uncle, Prince Hussein, was declared ruler of Egypt with the title of Sultan. In making formal announcement early in November of the outbreak of war with Turkey, the British Government gave a solemn pledge that Great Britain accepted the whole burden of the defence of Egypt against the Turk, and would not call on the Egyptian people for aid. It was a rash and unfortunate promise, which it was found impossible to keep.

The Suez Canal—a vital link in British imperial communications—is approximately 100 miles long from Port Said to Suez. Of this distance, two-thirds are canal, and one-third lake. In the northern section, between Port Said and Kantara (twenty-five miles), the channel has been dug along the east side of Lake Menzala, a large and shallow sheet of salt water; the canal banks here are low, and the view unimpeded. Between Kantara and Ismailia the banks are higher and there are two miles of deep cutting. From Ismailia at the north end of Lake Timsah to the north end of the Great Bitter Lake (fifteen miles) and thence to Suez (forty miles) the banks are also high, in places 25 to 30 feet above the water level; the east bank generally commands the west bank in the former section; there is little difference between their heights in the latter. The Canal is a formidable obstacle, 65 to 100 yards wide, and 34 feet deep.

It is important to realise that the Canal is cut through a desert and is distant some thirty miles from the cultivated delta of the Nile. The towns on the Canal—Port Said, Ismailia, Suez—are entirely dependent for a supply of fresh water on the Sweet Water Canal, which runs from the Nile at Cairo to Ismailia, where it branches north and south to Port Said and Suez. The railway from Cairo follows practically the same course as the Sweet Water Canal. These facts mark the importance of Ismailia as an objective to an invader of Egypt from the east. Once in control of

the gates and sluices at Ismailia, he can cut off the water to Port Said and Suez and render untenable the position of the defending forces to north and south of him. Conversely, success at either extremity of the Canal would bring him little advantage. His water supply would lie at the mercy of the defender, while he himself would be separated by many miles of salt lake or barren desert from the inhabited delta.

The task for the defence, however, was not merely to bar the road to Egypt, but to ensure every portion of the Canal from damage or destruction. This made it essential to guard its whole length. The troops available were twenty-four Indian battalions of the 10th and 11th Indian Divisions, the Imperial Service Cavalry Brigade (Indian), the Bikanir Camel Corps, three batteries of Indian mountain artillery, and a battery of Egyptian artillery—about 30,000 men in all. The presence of British and French warships compensated to some extent for the shortage of artillery. A detachment of the Royal Flying Corps and some French seaplanes were available for reconnaissance. In the interior, around Cairo, were the 42nd Division, some Yeomanry units, and the Australian and New Zealand contingents, in various stages of training and equipment. Altogether, Egypt in January, 1915, contained some 70,000 troops.

Sir John Maxwell entrusted to Major-General A. Wilson, commander of the 10th Indian Division, the defences of the Canal, which were divided into three sectors. There were a number of fortified posts on the east bank, connected by bridge or ferry with the west bank, on which lay the principal defence, leaving the Canal as an obstacle between the defenders and the enemy. Communication along the line, except by the railway, was a difficulty, for there were at this time no roads of any kind in the Canal zone, and small launches for water transport were scarce. The length of front to be watched was reduced early in December by the inundation of the low-lying plain east of the Canal between Port Said and Kantara—opposite Lake Menzala.\*

\* The area inundated is, according to Sir William Willcocks, the scene of the destruction of Pharaoh's host when pursuing Israel. (See his most interesting book "From the Garden of Eden to the Crossing of the Jordan.")

Immediately on the declaration of war with Turkey, Egypt had evacuated all the frontier posts, held by local Arab police, in Sinai. The Turks promptly occupied El Arish and Nekhl. Their troops in Syria and Palestine at the outbreak of war were the VI. Corps (H.Q. Adana) and the VIII. Corps (H.Q. Damascus), amounting to about 60,000 men and 100 guns. They had been formed in September into the Fourth Army, command of which was given to Djemal Pasha, the Minister of Marine, one of the triumvirate who ruled Turkey. Djemal Pasha, who remained as Governor and Commander-in-Chief of Syria and Palestine for the next three years, was an ambitious and unscrupulous megalomaniac. He had little military ability, but was an able and energetic administrator. A man of very independent character, he made little concealment of his dislike of the Germans. The commander of the VIII. Corps, also named Djemal,\* was a good soldier, who fought against the Egyptian Expeditionary Force throughout the war. But the guiding military brain of the expedition against the Canal, and of the Turkish effort in Palestine till towards the end of 1917, was found in a Bavarian colonel, Kress von Kressenstein, who was now Chief of the Staff to the VIII. Corps. A gallant, resolute and able soldier, he always commanded the respect of his British opponents. To him the credit for the preparations and planning of the expedition are mainly due.

The force that eventually assembled around Beersheba in mid-January for the march to the Canal consisted of approximately 20,000 men, with nine batteries of field artillery and one battery of 5.9-inch howitzers. The principal units were the 25th Division (Arab), one regiment of the 23rd Division, the 10th Division, one cavalry regiment, and some camel companies and mounted Bedouin.† About 10,000 camels accompanied the force to carry supplies, water and ammunition. No aircraft were available.

\* Usually known to the British as Djemal Kuchuk, or the lesser Djemal, to distinguish him from Djemal Pasha.

† According to Djemal, the 8th Division was to follow at once if the original force succeeded in establishing itself across the Canal.—("Memoirs of a Turkish Statesman, 1913-19.")

Before describing the Turkish advance, it is pertinent to consider what they can have hoped to achieve against Egypt with this force. The strength of the British garrison was not unknown to the Turkish higher command,\* who can have had no illusions either as to the resistance they were likely to meet or as to the formidable nature of the obstacle presented by the Suez Canal. Afterwards German and Turkish accounts spoke of this first expedition as a "reconnaissance," while Kress von Kressenstein asserts that the aim was to secure possession of some portion of the Canal for a few days and to effect its destruction. These objectives were proclaimed after the event. The expedition was certainly planned originally as a serious invasion of Egypt, which was confidently expected to rise in revolt against the British so soon as the Turkish forces drew near.

The objective of the expedition influenced the choice of route across the desert. There were three possible lines of advance :—†

- (a) By the coast road from El Arish, through Bir el Abd and Katia, to Kantara.
- (b) By the central tracks from Beersheba and Auja, by Hassana and the Wadi Muksheib, towards Ismailia.
- (c) From El Kossaima by Nekhl to Suez.

The coastal route is the easiest of the three, as the water supply is more assured. But the central route is firmer and better going, and was well out of reach of interference by British sea power. Unusually heavy rains had fallen in the winter of 1914-15, and had filled the pools and rock cisterns on the central road. The southern route is the most difficult of the three, and offered no special advantages. Djemal Pasha elected to make his main effort along the central route, sending smaller forces along the other two routes to secure the flanks and to deceive the British as to the real line of attack. If the invasion of Egypt were the aim, it was, as already pointed out, essential to secure control of the Sweet Water Canal at or near Ismailia as

\* Djemal Pasha states that his information was that the British had 35,000 troops along the Canal and 150,000 in the interior of Egypt.—("Memories of a Turkish Statesman," Chap. V., p. 155.)

† See Map. VI.

early as possible ; thus the central route led most directly to the objective. The main body, moving in two echelons at one day's interval, left Beersheba in the middle of January. The crossing of the desert was accomplished in ten days, marches being made by night to avoid the heat and in the hope of concealment.

The British were kept fairly well informed of the progress of the advance by reports from their aeroplanes. On January 26th and 27th posts towards either extremity of the line, at Kantara and at Kubri (seven miles north of Suez), were attacked. These attacks, which were only intended as feints, were not seriously pressed and did not deceive the British command. It soon became obvious that the main effort of the enemy would be made in the centre sector, somewhere between Serapeum (four miles south of Lake Timsah) and Ferdan (some seven miles north of Ismailia). About 12,000 to 15,000 Turks had been located opposite this front by February 1st. French and British warships had taken station in the Canal and reinforcements had been moved up behind Ismailia. On the threatened front there were posts (each of two companies of Indian infantry) on the east bank at Ferdan, Ferry Post (just opposite Ismailia), Tussum, Serapeum, and Deversoir (just north of Great Bitter Lake). The remainder of the defending force was on the west bank.\*

The Turkish attack was delivered at 3 a.m. on February 3rd. Under cover of darkness and the broken ground they brought up pontoons and rafts to the canal bank just south of Tussum, and succeeded in launching them. Troops had embarked and were proceeding to ferry themselves across when the alarm was given, and a heavy fire was opened from the posts on the west bank. Only three pontoons reached the west bank, and the occupants of these were all killed or taken prisoners. The attempt was a definite failure. Kress von Kressenstein, in his account, says that

\* Between Lake Timsah and the Great Bitter Lake were twelve posts, each of two platoons. Each platoon had about 600 yards of frontage and found three sentry groups. There was a local reserve of three companies at Serapeum. The sector contained two four-gun batteries (one of Egyptian artillery).

this night attack should have been delivered soon after dark on the evening of February 2nd, but for a thick sandstorm which delayed movement. He also alleges indiscipline and misbehaviour amongst the troops of the 25th Division (an Arab division), who made the attempt.

Notwithstanding the failure of their night attack, the Turks advanced again by daylight against the line between Tussum and Serapeum, and attempted to force a crossing. They feinted meanwhile at Ferdan and Kantara. The attack could make no headway, and soon after mid-day the Turks began their retirement. The garrison of Deversoir Post (two companies of Gurkhas) had previously attempted a counter attack on the Turkish left flank. Apart from this the retirement was unmolested. It was not till next day that the Imperial Service Cavalry Brigade crossed the Canal at Ferry Post, and even then its mission was reconnaissance and not pursuit, since further attacks by the Turks were expected. But, although the enemy still had the 10th Division intact, the spirit of the troops was shaken by their failure, and by the lack of any sign of a sympathetic rising in Egypt. Djemal Pasha, who was present in person, ordered a retreat to Beersheba. The retirement was general along all roads by February 5th, and by that afternoon, ship traffic was again proceeding normally along the Canal.

Kress gives the Turkish losses as 192 killed, 366 wounded, and 712 missing. Probably this is a slight understatement. British records give the prisoners as 716, and the Turkish dead buried on the battlefield as 238. The total Turkish losses can hardly have been less than 1,500 and may have been as high as 2,000.\* The British losses were little more than 150.

The Turks certainly deserve considerable credit for their performance in bringing so large a force with heavy guns and a bridging train across more than one hundred miles of desert.† But their enterprise was hazardous to the point of rashness, and was fortunate to escape severe punishment, if not disaster. They had no right to calculate on the complete passivity of the defence. The truth seems to be that Djemal Pasha

\* The total figure given by Djemal Pasha is 1,400.

† The guns and pontoon wagons were dragged by teams of oxen.

deceived himself completely as to the state of feeling in Egypt, and genuinely expected that the appearance of the Turkish force near the Canal would set Egypt ablaze against the British. Yet he seems to have taken no steps to concert such a rising by agents and by propaganda, or to inform himself on the real state of feeling.\* Had the Turks contented themselves with the less ambitious object of blocking the Canal, they might well have caused us serious embarrassment. But their attention was apparently so fixed on their more ambitious aim that they had not planned measures or made preparations for effecting extensive damage to the waterway.

In the actual execution of their attack, the failure of their feints to north and south to divert any British strength from the main point of attack contributed to their failure. The feints were too half-hearted to effect their purpose. It seems curious that a division of inferior troops was used in the principal attack, while a really good division, the 10th, was left idle, and in fact took no part at all in the fighting. The Turks seem to have hoped that the crossing of the Canal would be accomplished with little opposition.

On the British side, the line of defence taken up on the west bank had obvious defects, and invited the gibe flung at the time—"Is the garrison of Egypt defending the Canal, or is the Canal defending the garrison of Egypt?" Lack of trained troops and of engineering material certainly precluded any such elaborate system of works as was afterwards laid out to the east of the waterway. The circumstances may have obliged the main line to be placed on the west bank. But this need not have entailed a passive defence, which laid the canal open to damage and interruption, and allowed an enemy of inferior strength to retreat undisturbed. Mounted troops were available, and there was no reason why Indian infantry should have been less mobile than Turkish infantry. Lack of transport is given as a reason for the failure to pursue, but plenty of time had been available to improvise transport, and many camels were obtainable in Egypt. The truth seems to be that both troops and staff were at this

\* The folly of trusting to Egypt is an old story.—See II. Kings xviii. 21.



time new to the work and had not properly grasped the requirements for the conduct of desert warfare.

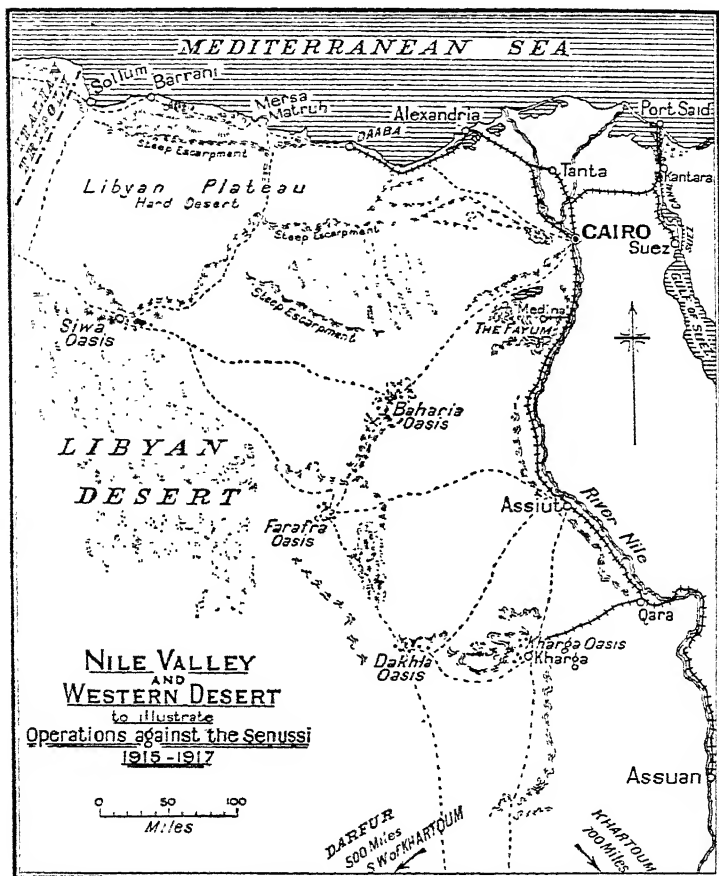
The result of the attack showed the Turks that there was every hope of immobilising large numbers of British troops in Egypt by the mere threat of blocking the Canal. Accordingly, while their main force withdrew to Beersheba, Kress was left in the desert with a force of three battalions, two mountain batteries and a squadron of camelry, to keep British anxieties alive by minor enterprises and raids against the Canal, a task he carried out with considerable ingenuity and energy.

## *2. The Western Desert Campaign*

While Djemal Pasha had been gathering his forces at the end of 1914 for the attack on Egypt, Enver had been leading the principal Turkish Army on a still more hazardous and ambitious enterprise—the invasion of the Caucasus in mid-winter. His rashness in the end cost him the loss of the greater part of his army. But the Russians were sufficiently hard pressed at Sarikamish in the first days of January, 1915, to appeal to the British Government for a diversion against Turkey. This appeal led to the first definite proposals for the forcing of the Dardanelles, and thus to the Gallipoli campaign. Of that gallant but ill-starred adventure no more need be related here than its reactions on the Egyptian garrison.

The landings at Helles and Anzac in April, 1915, after the failure of the naval attack in March, and the subsequent struggle for the Gallipoli Peninsula so fully occupied the Turks that there were no troops to spare in 1915 for any renewal of a large-scale expedition against the Canal. The activities of Kress von Kressenstein's small force, up till its withdrawal in the late summer, nevertheless enjoined constant watchfulness on the defenders. Kress was both persistent and ingenious. Raids and demonstrations by small columns against the Canal posts alternated with attempts by small parties to sow mines in the Canal or by a few determined men to wreck the railway on the western bank. None of these enterprises succeeded—fortunately the one steamer which struck a mine did not sink in the

fairway—but they certainly harassed the defenders of the Canal, who had not at this time any means of effective retaliation. In spite of Kress, however, the garrison was



MAP III.

reduced ; one Indian brigade departed to Gallipoli, another to Basra, and another to Aden, on which the Turkish troops from the Yemen threatened attack. The 42nd Division and the Australians and New Zealanders went to Gallipoli. The number of fighting troops in Egypt had been reduced to a

bare minimum when danger from a fresh quarter caused General Maxwell anxiety.

The Senussites are a religious sect of Islam, founded about the middle of last century by a pious sheikh of the Sahara Desert. His aim was simply to revive amongst the desert tribes the principles of the Mohammedan religion and to unite all Moslems of North Africa into one brotherhood. His principal adherents were the tribes of the Libyan Desert to the south of Tripoli and Cyrenaica as far as the western marches of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan. There were also some followers of the creed in Egypt, in the Sudan, and in various parts of Africa and Arabia. The sect was neither intolerant nor fanatical, like those other Moslem puritans, the Wahabis, and had not hitherto shown any spirit of aggressive militancy, though its members had opposed French penetration into Central Africa and had assisted the Turks in 1911 in their campaign against Italy in Cyrenaica. Their quarrel with Italy was continued mainly on commercial grounds, the Italians having closed the ports of Tripoli to them. The head of the Senussites at this time was Sayyid Ahmed.

At the outbreak of war in 1914 the Germans and Turks saw in the Senussi a powerful instrument for the embarrassment of their British enemies in Egypt and the Sudan. During the summer of 1915 German and Turkish officers—amongst them Nuri Bey, a half-brother of Enver Pasha, and Jaafar Pasha, an able Baghdadi Arab—urged the Senussi to an attack on Egypt. Sayyid Ahmed for long resisted their efforts to embroil him with a country with which he had always maintained good relations. Sir John Maxwell, by skilful and patient diplomacy, did much to counteract the hostile influence, and was successful in keeping him neutral for many months and in tiding over the most dangerous period for Egypt. His chief agent was Lieut.-Colonel Snow, of the Egyptian Coastguard Service.\* But the adherence of the Senussi's enemy, Italy, to the Allied cause provided the Turks with a powerful argument; their

\* Unfortunately killed in the earliest engagement with the Senussites, when hostilities at last broke out.

arguments were backed by a supply of arms, money and munitions, and eventually Sayyid Ahmed was persuaded to action.

To the west of the Nile Valley and Nile Delta lie the illimitable wastes of the Sahara Desert, a region of high dunes of soft shifting sand. But this desert is broken, at an approximate distance of 100 miles from the Nile, by a series of oases—Baharia, Farafra, Dakhla, Kharga—which reach south to over 500 miles from the Mediterranean coast. Along the coast itself, west of the delta, is a narrow plain, sparsely cultivated by Bedouin tribes. A railway runs along the plain from Alexandria for 100 miles to Daaba. Thence there is a cleared track (called the Khedivial motor road) to the small ports of Mersa Matruh, Barrani and Sollum, the last-named of which is about 250 miles west of Alexandria. The plain, normally dry and dusty, turns into sticky mud after rain, which is frequent between December and March. To the south a high rocky escarpment, rising steeply out of the plain, marks the edge of a plateau of hard desert, which stretches for over 150 miles to the Siwa Oasis, a stronghold of the Senussi, whence access to the oases west of the Nile is easy for Bedouin warriors.

The plan conceived by the Turks and Germans was for simultaneous advances on Egypt along the coastal plain, and from Siwa through the western oases. The Sultan of Darfur, on the outskirts of the Sudan, was to rise at the same time and to advance on Khartoum. This plan for some reason miscarried, and the attacks were disjointed and disconnected.

The danger to the British lay not so much in the size of the military force at the command of Sayyid Ahmed as in the spiritual authority he exercised. With memories of the Mahdi in his mind, Sir John Maxwell feared the possibility of serious religious and internal disorders should the Senussi once gain any striking success.

Hostilities in the coastal zone began in November. Sollum and other posts were evacuated, and Mersa Matruh was made the base for the British operations. The garrison of Egypt had been so greatly reduced during the Gallipoli

operations that the provision of suitable troops was difficult. The force collected under Major-General A. Wallace towards the end of November comprised :—

Composite mounted brigade :

Three composite regiments of Yeomanry.

One composite regiment Australian Light Horse.

Notts Battery R.H.A.

Composite infantry brigade :

Three Territorial battalions.

One battalion Indian Infantry (15th Sikhs).

Some South African troops and a New Zealand battalion were added later.

The Senussi's force consisted of a few mountain guns and machine guns, manned by Turks, some 5,000 so-called "regulars," which had been drilled by Jaafar Pasha, and a varying number of irregular tribesmen. General Wallace engaged the enemy on December 13th and 25th, near Mersa Matruh, and again at Hazalin on January 23rd, 1916. In these actions severe checks were administered to the Senussi ; but the rainy season and lack of transport prevented decisive success being obtained till the end of February, 1916. On February 20th, Major-General W. E. Peyton, who had succeeded General Wallace, began an advance to re-occupy Sollum. The enemy was brought to battle on the 26th at Agagia, about half-way to Sollum. After the infantry had captured the Senussites' position, the Dorset Yeomanry, by a fine charge—the first of many mounted attacks in the Egyptian and Palestine campaigns—broke on to their retreat and captured their commander, Jaafar Pasha.\* The charge was made over a thousand yards of open ground under heavy fire. The losses were 5 officers and 27 other ranks killed, 2 officers and 24 other ranks wounded, *i.e.*, 58 out

\* Jaafar Pasha's subsequent career is of interest. While a prisoner of war in Cairo citadel, he let himself down from the wall by a rope of army blankets. Those who have seen Jaafar will not be surprised to hear that the rope failed to stand the strain. He fell, breaking his ankle, and was recaptured. Later, when the Arabs of the Hejaz revolted from the Turks, he volunteered to serve with Feisal, and became commander of his regular forces. He received a C.M.G. for his services to the Allies in this capacity, and has since been Minister of War and Prime Minister in Feisal's cabinet in Iraq.

of a total of 184 who took part in the charge. The victory was decisive and there was little further fighting. Sollum was reoccupied on March 14th.

Meantime in February, another Senussite force under Sayyid Ahmed himself occupied the Baharia, Farafra, Dakhla and Kharga oases. This necessitated the 53rd Division and several brigades of dismounted Yeomanry being distributed in garrisons in Upper Egypt between the Fayum and Assuan during the summer of 1916. By October, 1916, a camel corps and light car patrols had been organised, with which the oases were reoccupied. Sayyid Ahmed retired to Siwa, where he was attacked and defeated at the beginning of February, 1917, by a force of armoured cars from Sollum under Brig.-General H. W. Hodgson. This finally liquidated the Western Desert campaign by discrediting Sayyid Ahmed and destroying his influence. His ally, Ali Dinar of Darfur, had already been defeated in May, 1916, by a force from the Sudan under Lieut.-Colonel P. V. Kelly.

The Senussi's invasion was less dangerous than it might have been had the enemy employed only guerrilla tactics and used his mobility to decline battle. It is usually a fatal mistake for irregular leaders to cramp their natural methods of warfare by adopting the training and tactics of regular armies. The Senussi's so-called regulars were no match for the British troops, and were easily defeated. The difficulties, on the other hand, of dealing with desert Bedouin who refuse to be drawn into engagements and who seek to accomplish their purpose by raids and by propaganda were to be shown later by Lawrence's leading of the Hejaz tribes against the Turkish communications.

### *3. The Second Turkish Attack on the Canal*

The end of the year 1915 was the Turk's brief hour of triumph. He had barred the Dardanelles against the most determined efforts of one British army; and had repulsed another at Ctesiphon in Mesopotamia, and hemmed it in at Kut. The overthrow of Serbia had secured the line of supply for munitions from Germany. With the troops released from

Gallipoli he now purposed to deal the British a still more shattering blow by a fresh invasion of Egypt in overwhelming force. The dream did not last long. The Grand Duke Nicholas struck from the Caucasus in January, 1916, and by the middle of February the famous fortress of Erzerum was in Russian hands. This setback delayed and weakened the intended advance on Egypt. The adherence of Bulgaria to the cause of the Central Powers had, however, forced on the Entente in the meantime the embarrassment of another theatre of war in the Eastern Mediterranean, at Salonika.

The defence of the Canal again became a serious pre-occupation for the British at the beginning of 1916. There was now no lack of troops. In addition to those evacuated from Gallipoli, who required a period of rest and recuperation after their struggles and hardships, fresh divisions had been despatched to Egypt from home late in 1915. Altogether, in January, 1916, there were in the country no fewer than twelve infantry divisions besides two brigades of Indian infantry, some brigades of dismounted Yeomanry, and a number of mounted brigades. For the moment the War Cabinet regarded this force as the strategic reserve of the Empire. They could not tell how the Salonika Campaign might develop, what further calls on their resources the rescue of Townshend at Kut might involve, nor how real was the danger to the Canal. Meanwhile Egypt was central, and the winter climate was good.

When the evacuation of Gallipoli was decided, the feasibility of solving our problems both in Egypt and in Mesopotamia by seizing the Turkish main line of communication, the Baghdad Railway, was again seriously debated. The suggestion was to land a force at Ayas Bay, on the western side of the Gulf of Alexandretta, and to get astride the railway about Missis, east of Adana. The operation would, however, have been hardly as simple as might appear from the map. It was estimated that a force of between 100,000 and 150,000 men would have had to be disembarked; and the results of Gallipoli did not encourage further experiments in landing operations on a large scale; also our French allies, for political reasons, looked coldly on

## THE CAMPAIGNS IN PALESTINE

the proposal. It was accordingly resolved to proceed no further with the scheme—undoubtedly a wise decision.\*

The disposal of the strategic reserve did not take long to settle. The 13th Division was sent on to Mesopotamia to strengthen the force struggling desperately to relieve Kut; the remainder were to be embarked, as soon as reorganised, for France, where it was hoped to strike a decisive blow in the summer of 1916, leaving in Egypt only the minimum necessary for the safety of the Canal.

The problem was to determine this minimum. Lord Kitchener had visited Egypt in November, and had roundly condemned the existing scheme of defending the western bank of the Canal. In December, General Horne,† sent specially for this purpose, selected a front line of defence at an average distance of about 11,000 yards east of the waterway, which was thus to be kept immune from long-range artillery fire. There was to be a second line of works about half-way between the first line and the Canal; while a series of fortified bridgeheads on the eastern bank formed a third line.‡ The construction of these lines required a very heavy expenditure of labour and of material. The Zagazig—Smailia section of the line from Cairo to the Canal was doubled; light railways were built out into the desert from the Canal at eight or nine different points, metalled roads were constructed and pipe lines laid. Altogether over one hundred miles of railway, road and pipe line were laid in a few weeks. In addition, many miles of trenches had to be dug, wired and revetted. The greater part of all this work was done by an organisation which grew in numbers and in fame as the campaign progressed, the Egyptian Labour Corps.

The defensive line had been most skilfully selected and most expensively constructed. But it was obvious that it required a large force to man it adequately, larger than could be conveniently spared for a purely defensive theatre of war. The General Staff at the War Office had in November, 1915, estimated the force required for the defence of Egypt at five

\* For further details see Sir William Robertson's "Soldiers and Statesmen," Vol. I., p. 138, and Vol. II., p. 149.

† Now Lord Horne.

‡ See Map II.



mounted brigades and six divisions for the Canal, two mounted brigades and two infantry brigades for the western desert, and one mounted brigade and fifteen garrison battalions\* for internal security in the Delta. Sir John Maxwell had at about the same time asked for twelve divisions, since intelligence reports credited the Turks with no fewer than 250,000 troops in Syria and Palestine. The Russian success in the Caucasus altered matters, by diverting a large proportion of the available Turkish strength to that theatre, and thus lessening the danger to Egypt.

A preliminary problem to be solved in Egypt was that of the command. At the beginning of 1916 there were three separate commands in the country. Lieut.-General Sir Archibald Murray had arrived in January to command the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force, lately evacuated from Gallipoli, and now holding the Canal Zone. Sir John Maxwell's sphere of responsibility was then confined to the troops in the Egyptian Delta, the Western Desert, and the Sudan; but he continued to administer martial law over the whole country including the Canal Zone. The third independent command was at Alexandria, where Major-General Altham was in charge of an organisation known as the Levant Base, which had been formed by the War Office towards the end of 1915 as a pool of stores of all kinds for the Gallipoli, Salonika, and Egyptian theatres. Obviously this system of three independent commands in a comparatively small area was impracticable, and early in March Sir Archibald Murray succeeded to a united command. At the same time the title of the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force was changed to that of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force (colloquially "the E.E.F."), by which name it was known for the remainder of the war.

Sir Archibald Murray at once set to work to review the whole problem of the defence of Egypt in the light of the existing conditions. In the middle of February he presented his conclusions to the Chief of the Imperial General Staff. He pointed out that the passive defence of the Canal was

\* Battalions of low-category personnel formed for garrison duties abroad during the war.

very wasteful of men and of material ; that the true strategical base for the defence of Egypt lay between El Arish and Kossaima ; and that a mobile force placed at or about El Arish would directly bar the northern route across Sinai, could attack in flank any force moving by the central or southern routes, and might even forestall any advance across the Egyptian frontier into Sinai, by attacking and breaking up enemy concentrations in Southern Palestine.\* The first step was the occupation of the Katia area, which he proposed to undertake at once. But the construction of a railway to that place was essential to the scheme. He estimated the total force required for the defence of the eastern frontier of Egypt, if El Arish were occupied, at five divisions and four mounted brigades.

Sir Archibald Murray's reasoning was obviously sound, and his proposal to occupy Katia was approved by the War Office, judgment being reserved on the question of the further advance to El Arish. Katia, which is some twenty-five miles east of the Suez Canal, is at the western end of a series of oases which extend for about fifteen miles to Bir el Abd.† In this area is a large supply of drinkable though brackish water. It was the only district within striking distance of the Canal where a considerable enemy force could be maintained for any length of time. The construction of a standard-gauge railway from Kantara towards Katia was begun at the end of February. Meanwhile the organisation of camel transport for one division and one mounted brigade, the force which was to occupy the Katia area, proceeded rapidly. From the beginning of April preliminary reconnaissances by the mounted troops were pushed forward into the oases. Steps were also taken to limit enemy action in the centre of Sinai by destruction of the water supply. Raids by mounted troops and aeroplanes were successful in breaking up many of the storage tanks and cisterns on the central route, by which the first Turkish attack had come.‡

\* "El Arisch . . . ce fort qui peut être considéré comme la clef de l'Egypte du côté de la Syrie."—("Napoleon-Memoires.")

† Napoleon made it his base for his advance across the desert to Palestine in 1799.

‡ On one of these raids to Jifjaffa (52 miles from the Canal) an A.L.H. squadron covered 120 miles in three and a half days.

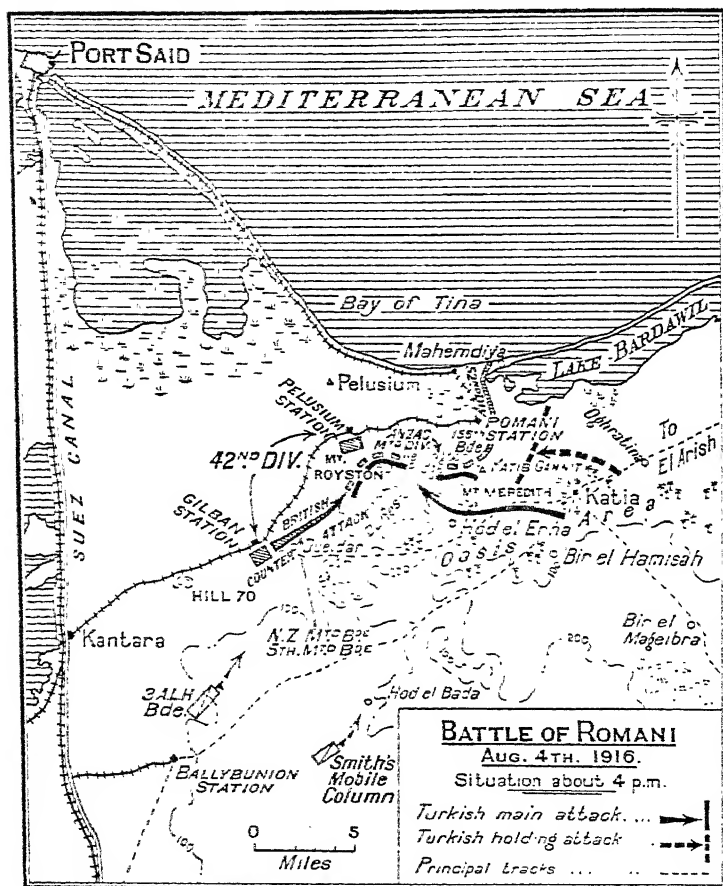
The Turks had projected another large-scale expedition against the Canal for the spring of 1916. The promised reinforcements, however, were slow in arriving, and the advance had to be postponed. But news of the constant departure of formations from Egypt to the Western front impelled the Turkish Higher Command, at German bidding, to order some immediate activity towards the Canal, in the hope of alarming the British and preventing any further withdrawal of troops.

The ever-active and enterprising Kress von Kressenstein accordingly set out in the middle of April along the northern route. He had with him two battalions and one company of the 32nd Regiment, a regiment of irregular Arabs on camels, and a battery and a half of mountain artillery. His total force amounted to approximately 3,500, with six guns and four machine guns.

The 5th Mounted Brigade (Warwickshire Yeomanry, Gloucestershire Hussars, Worcestershire Yeomanry), was at this time in the Katia district,\* covering the construction of the railway, which was now approaching Romani, and the reconnaissance and development of the water supply in the oases. On the evening of April 22nd, two squadrons of the Worcesters were at Oghratina, four miles east of Katia, covering work on the wells there by a Field Company R.E. ; one squadron of Gloucesters was at Katia, the remaining two squadrons were at Romani ; while the Warwickshire (two squadrons) and the remaining squadron of the Worcesters were assembled at Bir el Hamisah for attack on a Turkish force, which had been reported the previous day at Bir el Mageibra, ten miles south-east of Katia. Kress's raiding force, after a night march, fell on the detachment at Oghratina at 4.30 a.m. on the 23rd. A morning fog had hindered reconnaissance ; and the Yeomanry were surprised and overwhelmed after a gallant resistance of three hours. The Turks then pressed on to Katia, and at 8 a.m. attacked the squadron of Gloucesters, which was presently joined by the squadron of Worcesters from Bir el Hamisah. The two squadrons held out till 3 p.m., when they were overborne by

\* See Map IV. (p. 44).

weight of numbers. Meanwhile, the Warwicks, who had found Bir el Mageibra empty,\* and the Gloucesters from Romani advanced to the rescue of the Katia force. But their efforts were unco-ordinated, and were unavailing. When



MAP IV.

it was seen that Katia had fallen, the remains of the brigade were withdrawn towards the Canal. Further west, an infantry post at Dueidar (twelve miles from Kantara) was attacked by Turkish raiders from 5 a.m. to 1 p.m. without

\* The Turks located here had gone on to the attack of Dueidar.

success. The 2nd Australian Light Horse Brigade, which was at the time of the raid assembling at Salhia, eighteen miles west of Kantara, preparatory to moving out to Katia,\* re-occupied Romani and Katia on the 25th; the Turks had already withdrawn to Bir el Abd.

Kress could claim a notable tactical success for his raid; but it had no strategical effect and did not interfere with the programme of withdrawal of troops to the Western front. The Turks were either very well-informed or very fortunate in timing their attack just before the arrival of reinforcements; and the morning fog assisted them. The Yeomanry owed their disaster to faulty dispositions and inadequate reconnaissance, which their gallantry was unable to retrieve. They still had much to learn of mounted work.

After his success at Katia, Kress made no further move for nearly three months. He was waiting for the arrival of certain German technical units.† This delay gave the British valuable time to make good their occupation of the Katia area. The Anzac Mounted Division had been formed in March, under the command of an Australian cavalryman, Major-General H. G. Chauvel. It consisted of the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Australian Light Horse Brigades and the New Zealand Mounted Rifles Brigade. After the Katia disaster two brigades of the division (2nd A.L.H. and N.Z. Brigades) took over the duties of covering the railway construction and of patrolling the oasis area. Endowed with a natural aptitude for the work and a fine physique, the Dominion horsemen soon became seasoned warriors, and from now till the end of the war did magnificent work. As now in the desert, so later in the steep, rocky hills of Judæa and Moab, they showed the value of enterprising horsemen even in terrain the most unpromising for mounted troops.

\* One regiment reached Kantara on the 22nd, the remainder of the brigade left Salhia early on the 23rd and arrived at Kantara the same evening. It at once went on to Hill 70, to cover the retreat of the Yeomanry.

† These units, which were organised as a formation under the title "Pasha I." comprised five machine gun companies, five groups of anti-aircraft artillery, four batteries of heavy artillery, two Austrian heavy mountain batteries, two trench-mortar companies, a squadron of aeroplanes, three railway companies, and three lorry companies (for the Amanus break in the Baghdad Railway).

The standard-gauge railway from Kantara reached Romani in the middle of May, and the 52nd (Lowland) Division was moved forward to occupy a position there. From Mahemdiya, on the coast, a line of sand hills stretches inland for some six or seven miles to form a strong natural defensive position against an enemy advancing from the east. On this position a series of eighteen infantry redoubts (holding an average of 100 rifles and two machine guns each) was now constructed. The northern flank, near the coast, was covered by the western end of the great Bardawil Lagoon; the southern flank rested on a high outstanding dune called Katib Gannit. A broad ridge running generally westward from Katib Gannit marked the southern limits of the sandy plateau over which ran the railway. It was known as Wellington Ridge. Outside this position, to the south, stood a number of isolated sand dunes, about 225 feet high, of which the most prominent were named Mount Meredith, about four miles south of Romani, and Mount Royston, about the same distance to the south-west.\* Between these dunes gullies ran through Wellington Ridge towards the railway and the plateau, which lay in rear of the Romani position. A light railway (2 feet 6 inches gauge) had been built from Port Said to Mahemdiya; a branch of the standard-gauge line from Romani to Mahemdiya was completed early in June, and thus gave railway communication close behind the whole position.

By this time the E.E.F. had been much reduced in size. Of the twelve infantry divisions in Egypt at the beginning of the year there remained at the beginning of June only seven, and of these three more embarked for France in the course of the month.†

Once the position at Romani had been solidly organised, the construction of the railway towards Katia was continued. But early in July Kress moved again. His force

\* Mounts Meredith and Royston were so called after the leaders of the 1st and 2nd A.L.H. brigades. Royston was a fiery horseman, known to the Australians as "Gallopings Jack." He rode no fewer than fourteen horses to a standstill at the battle of Romani, galloping up and down the firing-line of his own and the neighbouring brigade.

† For a complete statement see Sir Archibald Murray's Despatches, Appendices A, B, C.

consisted of the 3rd Division (a good Anatolian division) and Pasha I. Some units of the latter were still delayed on the lines of communication. The total numbers were about 16,000, including some 12,000 rifles, thirty guns, thirty-eight machine guns. In quality the force was greatly superior to that which had attacked Egypt a year previously. The objective of this new venture was to reach and entrench a position within gun range of the Canal, so as to block it and interrupt traffic. The main body left Shellal, north-west of Beersheba, on July 9th and, marching mainly by night, reached Bir el Abd and Oghratina on July 19th, when its presence was discovered and reported.

Steps were at once taken to reinforce No. 3 Section of the Canal Defences, in which the forward position at Romani was included. On July 22nd this was held by the 52nd Division and one brigade of the 53rd Division, supported by thirty-six guns, including four 60-pdrs. On July 24th the 42nd Division was also placed under the commander of No. 3 Section, Major-General the Hon. H. A. Lawrence; its brigades were echeloned along the railway between Gilban Station and Kantara. Headquarters of No. 3 Section was at Kantara, twenty-five miles from Romani. The mounted troops were disposed as follows: 1st and 2nd A.L.H. Brigades at Romani, under H.Q. Anzac Mounted Division; N.Z. Mounted Brigade and 5th Mounted Brigade (Yeomanry) at Hill 70, east of Kantara; 3rd A.L.H. Brigade at Ballybunion Station, in No. 2 Section. At El Ferdan (also in No. 2 Section) a mobile column of four companies of the Imperial Camel Corps and four squadrons was formed, under Lieut.-Colonel C. L. Smith, V.C.

There can seldom have been a battle the general course of which could be more clearly foreseen than that of Romani. It was almost certain that the Turks would attempt to envelop the British right, since the other flank was unapproachable, and would aim at the railway west of Romani. Such an operation would commit them to the tangled mass of high dunes which lay beyond the British right. These were utterly waterless, and their soft, heavy sand made entrenchment difficult and reduced the pace of infantry to

little more than one mile an hour. General Lawrence purposed to allow the Turks to involve their main strength in this area, and then to counter-attack in the centre with his infantry and round the enemy's left with his mounted troops. Provided the Turk played the role allotted to him, this plan might achieve the complete annihilation of Kress's force.

At first the Turks seemed disinclined to carry out their part of the programme. On July 24th, after advancing to within ten miles of the Romani position, they halted and entrenched, and made little further move for ten days. It was not clear to the British commander whether his enemy was securing a base preparatory to an attack, or whether he was merely taking up a position to defend the coast route. So soon as General Murray had made all necessary moves to meet the first of these contingencies, he initiated the preparation of plans for an advance, should it be found that the Turks had elected to await attack. By the beginning of August, 10,500 camels had been concentrated to place the transport of the troops in No. 3 Section on a mobile basis. The date of the advance was fixed for August 13th, if Kress had not moved by then. Meanwhile the 1st and 2nd A.L.H. Brigades kept the Turks under close watch. One of these two brigades in turn moved out before dawn each morning and reconnoitred the enemy's position, returning to Romani at nightfall. The wisdom of establishing so regular a routine was questionable, and Kress was quick to seize advantage from it when his arrangements for attack were complete. On the evening of August 3rd his troops followed up the 2nd A.L.H. Brigade as it withdrew, with the intention of thus surprising the British and seizing Wellington Ridge during the night. Warned by the closer approach of the Turks during the previous few days that an attack was imminent, General Chauvel had on this night disposed his other brigade, the 1st A.L.H., in an outpost line southwards from Katib Gannit up to Hod el Enna. The Turkish attack, therefore, met strong resistance from this line and was disappointed in its hope of reaching the flank of the main British position unopposed. The Turks, in greatly superior strength, forced the 1st A.L.H.



Brigade back over Wellington Ridge in the early hours of August 4th, but, in spite of repeated efforts during the rest of the day, they never succeeded in crossing the ridge or establishing themselves on its crest.\* The 2nd A.L.H. Brigade, extended on the right of the 1st, was also forced to give ground and retire slowly towards the railway, till the New Zealand Brigade and 5th Mounted Brigade, coming up from Hill 70, not only definitely checked any further Turkish advance, but drove their left wing steadily back to beyond Mount Royston. Meanwhile the Turks had shelled the centre and right of the British main position and had advanced against it, but had not pressed home an attack.

By the late afternoon of the 4th the situation was as follows: the enemy's main body, spent and discouraged, lay committed in the difficult sand dunes on the British right; their holding attack had made no impression on the British main position. On the British side, the mounted troops, which had borne the brunt of the fighting, were still capable of much further effort. Fresh bodies of mounted troops from No. 2 Section—the 3rd A.L.H. Brigade and Smith's mobile column—were already on the move round the enemy's left. The 52nd Division had not been heavily engaged, and was well placed to strike the right flank of the Turks pinned by the mounted troops. The 42nd Division was moving forward from reserve. Not only was the battle won, but it seemed that the destruction of the greater part, if not the whole, of the Turkish force might be accomplished. But the end was disappointing. The mounted troops could not press forward in the heavy sand with sufficient speed, the 42nd Division was late to arrive, and the commander of the 52nd Division did not consider that the situation was yet sufficiently clear for him to initiate a counter-stroke. Next day, in spite of great exertions, in blazing heat, by all units of the British force, Kress made good the withdrawal of the greater part of his force. On the 6th and 7th he fought skilful rearguard actions against the mounted troops, and on the 9th he definitely repulsed a

\* "Wellington Ridge was recaptured at daybreak of August 5 by two battalions of the 136th Brigade, assisted by Australians and New Zealanders. Some 1,500 Turks surrendered here."

direct attack by the Anzac Mounted Division at Bir el Abd. He then withdrew to El Arish. He left behind nearly 4,000 prisoners, four guns, and nine machine guns, and his total casualties must have approached one-half of his force of 16,000. Yet he may be accounted lucky that his rash venture was not even more severely punished. The British losses amounted to about 1,100 in all, the bulk of which fell on the Anzac Mounted Division.

The Turk showed his finest qualities as a soldier at Romani. He attacked with resolution, struggled gamely when checked in his assault, outmarched the British infantry when he withdrew, and held off the pursuing horsemen in his retreat. Kress delayed his attack for a fortnight after his initial advance to await the arrival of some heavy artillery; but it seems doubtful whether its arrival can have outweighed the disadvantage of giving his enemy so much time for preparation.\*

Romani was a decided victory for British arms, and the fact that an even more striking success might perhaps have been won must not be allowed to disparage the result. The plan of the battle was well conceived, but defects in its execution allowed the Turks to escape from the trap in which they had placed themselves. Headquarters at Kantara would seem to have been too far back to control the battle. Of all military operations a counter-stroke requires the most delicate timing, and therefore the closest possible touch with the battle line by the responsible commander.† It is suggested that if one of the two divisional commanders at Romani had been placed in control of all troops there, and if the mounted troops in No. 2 Section had been placed directly under General Lawrence, the result might perhaps

\* Kress von Kressenstein himself explains the delay as follows: "the small yield of water in the oases between Beersheba and El Arish made it necessary to march the force by echelons at one or two days' interval. It was intended to assemble the whole force at El Arish, but here too the water was found insufficient and the troops had to be sent forward by echelons to Bir el Abd. But the chief delay was in passing the 10 cm. and 15 cm. guns over the sand-dune belt near El Arish. A track had to be made and the heavy artillery brought up by short stages. As soon as it arrived the attack was made."

† It may interest military students to trace a parallel between the Romani battle and that of Austerlitz.

have been different, and the victory more complete. Lack of aeroplanes—only sixteen were effective out of an establishment of twenty-eight—and therefore of information, was a contributory cause to the delay in setting the pursuit in motion. The men of the 42nd Division, untrained to the desert, were entirely unable to march far over the heavy sand in the great heat, and the 52nd Division could not move at the pace of the Turk. That the pursuit of the mounted troops was too direct and that sufficient efforts were not made to work round the Turkish flanks also seems a fair criticism. The difficulties of water supply were great, but the brilliant work of Smith's mobile column showed what might have been done.

#### 4. *The Arab Revolt in the Hejaz*

“ One man with a dream, at pleasure,  
Shall go forth and conquer a crown,  
And three with a new song's measure  
Can trample a kingdom down.”

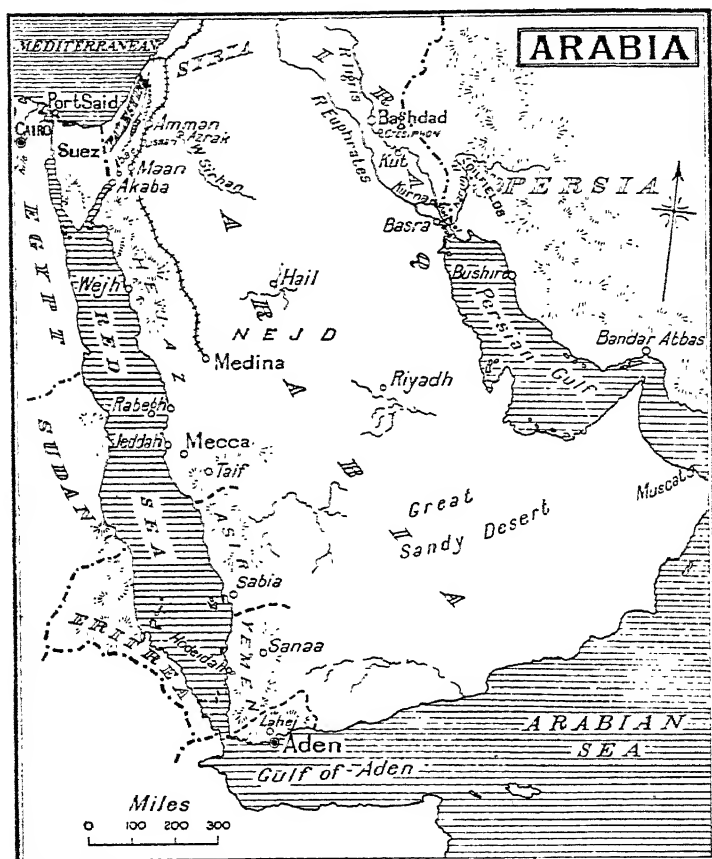
O'SHAUGHNESSY—*The Music Makers.*

In the summer of 1916 events occurred in the south-west of the Arabian Peninsula which were to give Great Britain a new ally—at a price—and to exercise considerable influence on the course of the subsequent campaigns in Palestine and Syria.

Germany had undoubtedly hoped to embarrass Great Britain and France—particularly the former—in many directions by securing Turkey as an ally. With the acknowledged spiritual head of Islam on their side, the Germans set great hopes on the disaffection of the Mohammedan subjects of their enemies, and on the goodwill, if not the active co-operation, of neutral Mohammedan nations. In this conception they showed characteristic misjudgment of psychological factors; but they showed equally characteristic thoroughness in their arrangements to foment anti-British feeling in Persia, Afghanistan, Arabia and elsewhere. Steps had to be taken on our side to counter this propaganda and to protect British interests. Accordingly, when Sherif Hussein, Amir of Mecca, showed a desire to throw off Turkish suzerainty, he was strongly encouraged

and given promises of material assistance by the British Government.\*

There is room here only for the briefest possible sketch of the geography and politics of that portion of the Arabian



MAP V.

Peninsula which borders the Red Sea. It comprises three regions: the Hejaz, Asir, and the Yemen. The Hejaz, the holy land of the Mohammedan religion, stretches roughly

\* The idea of binding the Arabs of the Hejaz to the British cause was suggested by Sir John Maxwell as early as October, 1914. Lord Kitchener seems to have had it in his mind even earlier.

from just south of the Gulf of Akaba to below Jeddah, the port of Mecca. The Hejaz railway from Damascus ends at Medina, some 250 miles north of Mecca. To the south lies the barren and rocky province of Asir, whose chieftain, the Idrisi Sayyid, was an inveterate enemy of the Turks. Further south, the Yemen stretched down to British territory at Aden, with Sanaa as its principal town and Hodeidah as its port. The ruler of the Yemen, the Imam Yahia of Sanaa, was a man of parts; he had been such a thorn in the side of the Turks that they had, after several costly campaigns, granted him a treaty on exceptionally favourable terms shortly before the outbreak of the Great War. During the war the Imam abided loyally by this treaty, and, though not actively assisting the Turks, fed and harboured the Turkish garrisons in the Yemen.

Over all three provinces the Turks maintained a nominal but unsubstantial rule. They in fact exercised little authority outside the principal towns where their troops were quartered. At the outbreak of war their garrisons consisted of one division (22nd) in the Hejaz, one (21st) in Asir, and two (39th and 40th) in the Yemen. The British blockade of the Red Sea practically isolated the troops in Asir and the Yemen. Those in the Yemen made an attack on the Aden protectorate in July, 1915, and at one time threatened the fortress, necessitating the despatch of a brigade from Egypt to drive them off (see p. 34). After this no events of importance took place in the southern portion of the peninsula during the remainder of the war. We contented ourselves with holding the fortress and made no attempt to throw the Turks out of the hinterland which they had occupied.\*

Negotiations with Sherif Hussein, which began as soon as Turkey declared war, were concluded by the agreement made by Sir Henry MacMahon, High Commissioner for Egypt, in October of that year. Hussein had conceived the idea of a revival of an Arab Empire, to include Arabia, Iraq, Palestine and Syria. In principle Great Britain accepted the idea of

\* At the end of the war, when the Turkish troops were evacuated, the Imam occupied a substantial portion of the Aden Protectorate on which the Turks had encroached. Prolonged negotiations were required before he was finally induced to withdraw.

Arab independence in Arabia. with certain limitations, to satisfy French claims to a special interest in the future of Syria. Hussein did not at once declare himself, but plotted for a general Arab rising in Syria. Matters were finally precipitated by Djemal Pasha's severe repressive measures against the leaders of the Arab movement in Syria, which had become known to him, and by the arrival in Medina at the end of May, 1916, of 3,000 additional Turkish troops, intended to pass through the Hejaz and Asir to reinforce the 39th and 40th Divisions in the Yemen.

The revolt broke out on June 5th, 1916. The greater part of the Turkish garrison of Mecca was in summer quarters at Taif, in the hills south-east of Mecca. The few troops actually in the town were soon disposed of, and those at the sea port of Jeddah surrendered on June 16th. The force at Taif maintained itself till the third week in September, when, despairing of relief, it capitulated. But all efforts of the Arabs against Medina failed. The Turkish commander, Fakhreddin Pasha, was a stout-hearted Turk of the old school, who had no intention of being intimidated into delivering up his charge; and the attacking Bedouin were powerless against regular troops and entrenched positions. Nor is a prolonged campaign suited to their methods of making war. The forces besieging Medina began to lose heart and to melt away. The Turks were reinforced towards the end of the year, and were strong enough to undertake an expedition to re-establish themselves in Mecca.

The last months of 1916 were thus the critical period of the Arab rising. The control of the Hejaz operations was at this time under Sir Reginald Wingate, Sirdar and Governor-General of the Sudan.\* On the staff of the Arab Bureau in Cairo was Captain (afterwards Colonel) T. E. Lawrence, who was to win a legendary fame as the leader of the revolt in the field. At the crisis of the revolution,

\* Sir John Maxwell during his period of command had largely controlled the negotiations with Amir Hussein and had formed an Arab Bureau as part of his intelligence staff. But Sir Archibald Murray, when he took over command, was unwilling to assume direction of the movement, and consented to its being directed by the Sirdar.

when the Turkish expedition to recover Mecca seemed likely to succeed, the British Government, on the advice of General Wingate and of the Governor-General, Sir Henry McMahon, proposed to send a brigade of Indian troops to Rabegh on the Red Sea coast to support the Arabs.

This policy was strongly opposed by Sir Archibald Murray and by the Arab Bureau, who rightly doubted both the wisdom and the effectiveness of the detachment.\* While the decision still hung in the balance, Lawrence succeeded, while on leave from Cairo, in reaching the camp of Feisal, Hussein's third son, who commanded the Arab forces in front of Medina. A short experience of conditions in the Hejaz enabled Lawrence to produce convincing arguments to support the views of the Arab Bureau. He recognised that the true policy for the Arabs lay not in assaults on the works of Medina nor in direct opposition to Turkish regular troops in the open field, for neither of which their forces were suited, but in gradually spreading the revolt northward up to the very gates of Damascus, with propaganda as the principal weapon, and in ceaseless raiding on the long Turkish lines of communication to Medina. The capture of Medina would merely rid the Turks of a military embarrassment, whereas the maintenance of a garrison there would cause a constant drain on their resources.† Lawrence accordingly persuaded Feisal to counter the Turkish advance on Mecca by a flank march of 250 miles to Wejh on the coast, whence he would threaten the communications to Medina from the north. The success of this move, which was carried out towards the end of January, 1917, was instantaneous and striking. The Turkish advance on Mecca was stopped short, and the Turks were compelled to scatter forces along the Hejaz Railway. Sir Archibald Murray and the British Government were thus relieved of the problem of the Rabegh Brigade. It was now decided instead to raise and train at Wejh a force of regulars for Feisal, recruited mainly from Arab prisoners of war in the camps in Egypt.

\* For an account of the Rabegh controversy from the point of view of the General Staff, see "Soldiers and Statesmen," Vol. II., pp. 153-163.

† A very able and entertaining exposition of this policy was given by Lawrence himself in the *Army Quarterly* for October, 1920.

The next stage in the policy of spreading the Arab revolt northwards was the occupation of Akaba, at the head of the gulf of that name, an arm of the Red Sea. But a successful landing at Akaba would still leave the Arabs faced with difficult defiles and gorges which the Turks had fortified to prevent any penetration inland. Lawrence therefore determined to attack Akaba from the land side. Starting off from Wejh with a few men in April, he rode almost up to Damascus and succeeded in enlisting a force of tribesmen to attempt the capture of Akaba. Early in July, after destroying a Turkish force at Aba-el-Lissan, he occupied Akaba. Feisal's force from Wejh was then moved round by sea by the Navy \* and established its base at Akaba.

The further history of the Arab movement will be related later. Its value to the British commander was great, since it diverted considerable Turkish reinforcements and supplies to the Hejaz, and protected the right flank of the British armies in their advance through Palestine. Further, it put an end to German propaganda in south-western Arabia and removed any danger of the establishment of a German submarine base on the Red Sea. These were important services, and worth the subsidies in gold and munitions expended on the Arab forces.

\* Admiral Sir Rosslyn Wemyss, Commander-in-Chief East Indies and Egypt, was a very good friend to the Arab cause, and was always ready to assist them.



## CHAPTER III

### CROSSING OF THE SINAI DESERT AND FIRST OFFENSIVE INTO PALESTINE

1. *The Advance to El Arish and Rafa.*—General situation—H.Q. of E.E.F. moves to Cairo—The railway and pipe line across the desert—Transport and labour—Occupation of El Arish—Action of Magdhaba—Action of Rafa—Comments.

2. *First Battle of Gaza.*—Topography of Southern Palestine—Reorganisation of E.E.F.—Turkish dispositions—Preparations and plan for attack on Gaza—The battle—Comments.

3. *Second Battle of Gaza.*—General situation—Preparations and plan—Turkish dispositions—The battle.

4. *Events from April to July, 1917.*—British dispositions—Destruction of Auja railway—General Allenby succeeds General Murray.

Order of Battle, E.E.F.—March, 1917.

(SEE MAPS VI., VII., VIII.)

#### 1. *The Advance to El Arish and Rafa*

The victory at Romani marked a turning point in the campaigns based on Egypt. Henceforward that country and the Canal were safe from Turkish attack. From now till the end of the war the British were the aggressors in this theatre. But it was a small sector only of the extended battle line, and was dependent for its policy on the sway of the conflict in other parts of the line. This fact explains seeming inconsistencies and vacillations in the instructions of the War Cabinet for the conduct of the operations of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force. Thus in the early autumn of 1916, immediately after the battle of Romani, the general situation did not seem to the War Cabinet to call for any forward policy on the part of the force under Sir Archibald Murray's command. The French Army had emerged panting but triumphant from the battle of Verdun, designed by the Germans to exhaust its last strength, and had been able to take its share with the British in the great Somme battle, which was still raging

fiercely. In Russia, Brusilov's offensive had revived hopes that were not in the end to be realised ; it had at any rate stopped short the Austrian offensive against Italy, and had persuaded Rumania at last to take the plunge and join the Allies. In the European theatres, then, all seemed to be going well. In Asia, active operations were suspended. The Grand Duke Nicholas was consolidating his advance to Trebizond and Erzinjan ; General Maude was reorganising the force that had failed to relieve Kut ; and no danger threatened from the Turks, the best of whose remaining divisions had been requisitioned by their German masters for the European theatre. The War Cabinet had at this moment no other tasks for General Murray's army than to maintain the security of Egypt and to lend a helping hand to the new recruit to the Allied cause, King Hussein. They sanctioned the continuation of the advance to El Arish, but only as an essential part of the defence of Egypt.

By the beginning of December, however, the situation had been changed and the policy modified. The Somme battle had reached an indecisive conclusion without the hoped-for breaking of the German line, and had been extremely costly of life ; Brusilov's offensive had died down without further success ; and Rumania had been speedily overrun. The direction of the war, moreover, had changed hands in Great Britain ; Mr. Lloyd George succeeded Mr. Asquith as Prime Minister on December 7th, 1916. One of the first acts of the new Premier, who was always searching for the joints in Germany's armour elsewhere than on the Western front, was to have a telegram sent to Murray to the effect that successes in the East were much required. In reply to this the Commander-in-Chief of the E.E.F. called attention once more to his original estimate of five divisions and four mounted brigades as needed to reach and hold El Arish.\* He had now available six mounted brigades, but only four divisions, and these were in October 6,000 under strength. If he were required to operate beyond El Arish into Palestine, he needed two more divisions, making six in

\* See page 42. He had already repeated this estimate in a detailed appreciation sent to the War Office on October 21st, 1916.

all.\* After some further telegrams, General Murray was informed on December 15th that the defence of Egypt was to be the main consideration, but that subject to this he was to be as aggressive as possible with the troops at his disposal.† Though Mr. Lloyd George was still anxious for his project of a forward policy against Turkey, reinforcements could not be spared from the Western front, where a great offensive was being planned for the spring of 1917.

In October, 1916, Sir Archibald Murray moved his headquarters from Ismailia to Cairo. The Western frontier of Egypt still lay under the threat of the Senussi's force in the western oases; in the Sudan the revolt of Ali Dinar, Sultan of Darfur, had been defeated but not finally liquidated; the fate of the Arab rising in the Hejaz hung in the balance; the functioning of martial law and the internal situation in Egypt required careful watching; finally, General Murray still had some responsibility for the administration of the British force at Salonika. All these commitments could be more expeditiously handled from Cairo, and the move was perhaps at the time inevitable. But at Cairo Murray and his staff lost touch with the fighting troops. He was henceforward an administrator rather than the commander of an army in the field. He entrusted the conduct of the advance in Sinai to Lieut.-General Sir Charles Dobell, under whom were placed all troops east of the Canal, to be known as Eastern Force.

The lines of communication organised for the advance across Sinai were a typically British piece of work—slow, very expensive, immensely solid. The famous epigram of Tacitus on the Romans—"they make a desert and call it peace"‡—might aptly have been inverted for this British advance—"they turn the desert into a workshop and call it war." It was Sir Archibald Murray's foresight in basing the advance from the first on so broad a foundation as the standard-gauge railway and 12-inch pipe-line, which

\* Of these six divisions he proposed to employ three for passive defence of his communications.

† For a full summary of the correspondence see Sir Archibald Murray's despatch of June 28th, 1917, in the complete edition.

‡ "*Solitudinem faciunt, pacem appellant.*"



begun at the end of February, 1916. It took two and a half months to reach Romani (twenty-five miles), whence a branch was made to Mahemdiya. When work was resumed after the battle, it progressed at an average speed of about fifteen miles a month. Its length from Kantara to the Wadi Ghuzze opposite Gaza was 140 miles, with a branch of seventeen miles from Rafa to Shellal (built in May, 1917), and a short spur from Shellal to Gamli. It was laid and operated by R.E. railway companies, the heavy labour being provided by the Egyptian Labour Corps. The Egyptian State Railways furnished much of the material for the permanent way (pulling up branch lines in Egypt to do so), the greater part of the rolling stock, and much technical assistance. The average capacity of the line was thirteen trains daily.\* The construction of the permanent way presented no great difficulties, but the water supply required special arrangements. The water obtained from wells on the route was too saline for use in the engines, which had to be filled from the pipe-line supply.

From Kantara to El Arish the water obtained by sinking wells is also too brackish for continual drinking by Europeans, and it was used for animals only. The troops and railway were dependent on water obtained from the Sweet Water Canal. A supply from this source had already been piped across the Canal at many points in 4-, 5-, and 6-inch pipes to the forward positions of the entrenched line east of the Canal. When the advance to El Arish was undertaken, General Murray asked for a supply of 12-inch piping. This was obtained from America, and arrived in two consignments in September and October. The pipe-line reached Romani in the middle of November, soon caught up railway construction, and reached El Arish practically at the same time as the railway. The plant was designed to deal with 600,000 gallons a day; it comprised filtering machinery at Kantara West,† and pumping stations and reservoirs at Kantara East, Romani, Bir el Abd, Mazar, at each of which

\* For full details of the railway work, see Appendix E of Sir Archibald Murray's despatches.

† The Sweet Water Canal is infested by a dangerous bug known as bilharzia ("Billy Harris" to the troops).

the water was driven forward to the next station. During construction, when water could not always be pumped to railhead, it was carried from the last pumping station in water trains. From railhead it was distributed to the troops by camel convoys in small tanks known as fanatis, of which a camel carried two, each holding  $12\frac{1}{2}$  gallons.\*

Beyond El Arish both the quality and quantity of local supplies increased, and the troops were less dependent on piped water, of which the railway was the principal consumer. The pipe-line was eventually extended by the end of October, 1917, just previous to General Allenby's advance on Jerusalem, to within a short distance of Gaza and Beersheba, thereby, so it is said, fulfilling an ancient prophecy to the effect that "when the waters of the Nile came to Palestine, Jerusalem would be retaken from the Turks." †

Over the soft sands of the Sinai Desert camels were the only practicable means of transport. Wheels sunk too deeply unless provided with ped-rails,‡ such as were attached to the wheels of the guns, enabling them to be moved at a slow pace by teams of eight or ten horses. Fifteen miles was a long march for artillery, and twenty-five miles—covered mostly at the walk—an exhausting day for cavalry. Some use was made of sand sledges for the transport of wounded. An ingenious use of rabbit netting, pegged down to the sand, produced the "wire roads," which facilitated the movement of infantry and Ford cars, but would not stand heavier traffic. Early in 1916 nearly 20,000 camels were employed with the Egyptian Expeditionary Force; by the middle of 1917 the numbers amounted to 35,000. They were organised in companies of about 2,000 camels each, under Egyptian drivers.§

\* For details of the water supply see Appendix D of Sir Archibald Murray's despatches and the article on page 83 of "The Advance of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force."

† "By a prophet of the Lord," the prophecy is supposed to have run. General Allenby's name transliterated into Arabic was equivalent to "Allah en Nebi"—the prophet of God.

‡ Blocks of wood 1 foot square by  $2\frac{1}{2}$  inches thick, held on to tyres by chains.

§ See Appendix G. of Sir Archibald Murray's despatches.

Egypt's contribution to the working of the communications was a large one. In addition to the material, the rolling stock, and the managing staff lent by the State railways, as well as the personnel and many of the animals provided for the Camel Transport Corps, she supplied that invaluable organisation the Egyptian Labour Corps. The strength of the corps grew from 3,000 at the beginning of 1916 to 25,000 in August, 1916, and to 56,000 a year later. In addition, many thousands went to France and to other theatres of war. To produce these numbers very active recruiting was necessary, since nothing would induce the Egyptian to bind himself for a longer period of service than three months. In theory enlistment was entirely voluntary; in practice, many abuses crept into the methods of recruitment as the requirements grew. In fact, what virtually amounted to conscription was enforced in many parts of the country; this was one of the principal grievances which caused the Egyptian rising in 1919. The military authorities were not responsible for the recruiting, nor, therefore, for the grievance, except in so far as their appreciation of the work of the corps caused their demands for increased numbers. The tasks performed by the corps were indeed various. It laid the railway and the pipe-line, made the wire roads, loaded and unloaded ships and trains, manned the surf boats when later in the campaign stores were landed on the coasts of Palestine and Syria, and performed manifold other useful duties.\* Its personnel sometimes worked under fire and suffered casualties. They bore without a murmur violent extremes of heat and drought—to which they were partly accustomed—and of cold and wet—to which they were certainly not.

The period of three or four months following the Battle of Romani, during which the railway was being brought within striking distance of the Turkish position at El Arish, were weary and monotonous in the extreme to the troops in the desert. Since a reconnaissance in force to Bir el Mazar

\* For further information of the E.L.C. see Appendix F of Sir Archibald Murray's Despatches, article on pp. 107-110 in "The Advance of the E.E.F.," and Colonel Elgood's very interesting book "Egypt and the Army," which gives a good account of the recruiting methods employed.

on September 17th, 1916, had decided the enemy to withdraw from that position no action of any importance had taken place. Early in December the advanced guard of Eastern Force, known as the Desert Column, came under the command of Lieut.-General Sir Philip Chetwode. It consisted at this time of the Anzac Mounted Division, the Imperial Camel Corps Brigade,\* and the 42nd and 52nd Divisions. The railway was now within twenty miles of El Arish, where the enemy had a force of 1,600 infantry, with supporting bodies at Magdhaba and at Abu Aweigila, further south along the Wadi El Arish. Elaborate water arrangements necessitated the final advance being delayed till December 20th. Then, just when all was ready, the enemy withdrew, and when the mounted troops surrounded El Arish on the morning of the 21st they found the place unoccupied.

The enemy had retired partly on Rafa and partly on Magdhaba. Chetwode decided to strike at the latter force at once, and despatched against it General Chauvel with the Anzac Mounted Division and the Imperial Camel Corps Brigade. Chauvel reached the Turkish position at dawn on December 23rd, after a night march of twenty miles up the Wadi El Arish. He found the enemy strongly posted in a circle of redoubts on both sides of the wadi. By midday his force had practically surrounded the position. But for some time the attacks on the redoubts made little progress; no water was available for men or horses, and shortly before 2 p.m. Chauvel issued orders for a withdrawal. Just at this moment, however, his horsemen rushed one of the Turkish redoubts; it was the beginning of the end, and at 4.30 p.m., just as darkness fell, the whole position was captured. Chauvel, after consultation on the telephone with Chetwode, had cancelled his order for withdrawal soon after its issue. Four mountain guns were captured and 1,282 men of the

\* Made up of eighteen companies (ten Australian, six British, two New Zealand) organised into four battalions, mounted on camels, with an Indian mountain battery of six guns and a machine-gun squadron of eight Vickers guns. The camel carried food for himself and his rider for five days, water for his rider for five days, blankets, overcoat, etc.; total weight with rider about 320 lbs. Camel and man thus formed a self-contained unit for five days' desert warfare.



80th Turkish Regiment were taken prisoner; ninety-seven of their dead were buried on the field. The British losses were twenty-two killed and 124 wounded. The force returned to El Arish during the night of December 23rd/24th, having ridden nearly fifty miles and fought a stiff action within little more than twenty-four hours.\*

Immediately on the occupation of El Arish the Navy appeared and cleared up an enemy mine field. By December 23rd stores were being landed on the beach. This source of supply permitted infantry to be brought up to make the occupation of El Arish secure. The next move was against the only enemy troops still remaining within Egyptian territory, a detachment of some 2,000 at Rafa, twenty-five miles to the east. The railway reached El Arish on January 4th, and on the evening of January 8th General Chetwode rode out with the Anzac Mounted Division (less one brigade), the 5th Mounted Brigade (Yeomanry), the Imperial Camel Corps Brigade, and No. 7 Light Car Patrol.† After a skilfully-conducted night march he surrounded the Turkish position at El Magruntein, south-west of Rafa, soon after dawn on the 9th.

But the position was a very strong one. It consisted of three groups of works on rising ground, backed by a central keep or redoubt on a prominent hill. None of the works were wired, but they commanded a field of fire up to 2,000 yards over ground devoid of any cover. The fight took a course curiously similar to that at Magdhaba. For a long time little progress was apparent. Between 3 p.m. and 4 p.m. Turkish reinforcements were reported on the move from Shellal and Khan Yunus; the assaults on the Magruntein works seemed to have come to a standstill, and ammunition was running short.‡ At 4.30 p.m. General Chetwode gave orders for a withdrawal; but, as at Magdhaba, the determination of the troops transformed the

\* An interesting description of the intense weariness of the night ride back from Magdhaba is given in "The New Zealanders in Sinai and Palestine," pp. 54-55.

† Six Ford cars, each carrying a machine gun.

‡ All wheeled transport, including the ammunition, had been left behind at Sheikh Zowaid.

situation and brought success at the very moment when their leader had decided that the task was beyond their powers. Before the order to withdraw could reach them, the New Zealand Mounted Brigade cleared the central keep by a fine bayonet charge. A little later the Camel Corps carried one group of works by assault. After this the remainder of the defences soon fell, and as darkness came the victory was complete. The whole Turkish garrison—two battalions of the 31st Regiment and a battery of mountain guns—was accounted for. The prisoners numbered 1,635, and the killed were estimated at 200. The British losses were 71 killed and 415 wounded.

These two actions at Magdhaba and Rafa are excellent examples of the potentialities of boldly-handled mounted troops, and also of their limitations when they are set to attack entrenched positions on foot. The Turkish detachments were beyond the range of the British infantry, and they considered, with some reason, that the strength of their works sufficiently protected them from assault by mounted troops. For a mounted force shrinks to little more than half its strength when committed to an attack on foot; its lack of depth and of fire power unfit it for a prolonged advance dismounted against strong works and against time. Few other horsemen would have had the determination to carry through these attacks, or the skill to do so without heavier punishment. The Camel Corps Brigade showed its value in these engagements; though less mobile than the Light Horse Brigades, it could deploy a deeper and more solid body for dismounted attack, since it could put some 1,600 to 1,700 rifles into the firing line. The question of water for the animals of the force placed another important limitation on these operations; and here again the Camel Corps had an advantage. One lesson of these fights is certainly that mounted troops require an extra proportion of artillery to compensate for the lack of rifle power, and that at least a part of such artillery should be armed with a gun or howitzer firing a heavier shell than the 13- or 18-pdr. Mechanical transport may permit of the heavier types of ordnance being employed without loss

of mobility, if the terrain is suitable, but it is doubtful whether tanks or any form of mechanical traction at present designed could have operated for long in the loose sandy soil over which these actions were fought.

These Turkish detachments which were overwhelmed were serving no useful strategical or tactical purpose. Kress von Kressenstein urged their withdrawal, but he was overruled, apparently from political motives. If so, the Turks paid dearly for the attempt to maintain for a little longer a footing within Egyptian territory. The action of Rafa finally cleared Egyptian soil of Turkish occupation, and subsequent operations were motivated by other considerations than that of the protection of Egypt.

## *2. First Battle of Gaza*

On January 11th, 1917, General Murray received a telegram to the effect that the policy of the War Cabinet was to defer any large-scale operations on the Palestine front till late in the year. Preparation was to be made during the summer for an offensive campaign in the autumn, and in the meantime a division would be withdrawn to France. This was, in effect, merely a development of the policy laid down a month earlier. The War Cabinet, as already mentioned, was committed to a great spring offensive in France as its principal effort, and was naturally concentrating all available strength for the purpose. The Prime Minister was, however, also determined on a vigorous prosecution of the Eastern campaigns as opportunity should permit; General Maude, in Mesopotamia, had already begun the advance which was to avenge our Kut defeat.

General Murray's army had now approached the southern frontier of Palestine.\* East of El Arish the country begins to change from the desert to the sown; at Rafa the sand dunes have shrunk to a belt along the coast, two to three miles wide, and the light soil is under barley cultivation for ten to twelve miles inland of this strip. The ground gives firm enough going for horses or men, but it will not stand heavy motor transport. There are no roads. The Wadi Ghuzze, which flows into the sea six miles south of Gaza,

\* See Map VIII.

fed by its inland branches, the Wadis Esh Sheria, Imleih, Saba, Khalasa, drains the southern slopes of the Judæan Hills, and forms the natural physical limit of Palestine to the south, though it has never actually been the frontier. It is a notable feature and a very considerable obstacle, more than one hundred yards broad in places, with steep rugged banks, sometimes thirty to forty feet high. Like the Wadi El Arish, it comes down in violent spates during the rainy season ; in the summer it has no running stream, but there are numerous springs in its bed whence a good supply of water can be developed.

East of the Wadi Ghuzze the ground rises gradually to an irregular chain of heights running generally south-east from Gaza towards Beersheba, and forming a natural rampart against invasion from Sinai. Gaza and Beersheba—some twenty-five miles apart—are the gateways of Southern Palestine, the former by reason of its commanding position on the coast road, the latter as the last water base on the confines of the mountainous wilderness to east and south. Gaza, lying on a low hill about two miles inland, has a long history as a fortress.\* It has been besieged and sacked by many conquerors, including such famous masters of war as Alexander the Great, Pompey, and Napoleon. Beersheba has a less warlike record ; it lies outside any usual route of invasion, and has served as a watering place for flocks and herds rather than for footmen and troopers.

General Murray saw how greatly the projected autumn campaign would be facilitated and quickened could it start with his troops in possession of the springs in the Wadi Ghuzze, and with that obstacle—the most serious the railway had yet had to cross—firmly bridged. Better still if Gaza itself could be seized ; for then not only would the Gaza—Beersheba position be denied to the enemy, but roads—partly metalled and fit for all forms of transport in the dry season—would be available immediately from railhead. These advantages were certainly worth an effort and some risk to secure. The principal routes from Gaza ran (a) directly to Jaffa, keeping close to the coast ; (b) to

\* Its name apparently means " fortress."

Jerusalem *via* Latrun and Amwas; and (c) to Beersheba. The road from Jaffa to Jerusalem joined the route from Gaza at Latrun. From Beersheba a road ran north by Hebron up the spine of the Judæan Range to Jerusalem, and thence on to Nablus. These were the main roads of Southern Palestine; many lesser tracks led across the Plain of Philistia.

Between January and March, 1917, important changes took place in the composition of Eastern Force. The 42nd Division departed for France at the end of January, and its place at El Arish was taken by the 53rd Division, released from garrison duties in Upper Egypt by the expulsion of the Senussites from the western oases. The 54th Division, from the Southern Canal defences, was also concentrated early in the year to follow the 53rd Division up to the Palestine border. A new division, the 74th, was being formed from the dismounted Yeomanry brigades in Egypt; it had at present no artillery or other divisional troops. The formation in February of an additional Light Horse Brigade, the 4th, and the release of other mounted troops by the liquidation of the Western Desert campaign resulted in the reconstitution of the horsemen of the army into two divisions, each of four brigades. The Anzac Mounted Division now consisted of the 1st and 2nd Australian Light Horse Brigades, the New Zealand Brigade, and the 22nd Mounted Brigade (Yeomanry). The new division, which was given the name of the Imperial Mounted Division, comprised the 3rd and 4th Light Horse Brigades and the 5th and 6th Mounted Brigades. Major-General H. W. Hodgson received the command. Thus Eastern Force under General Dobell consisted by March of three infantry divisions (52, 53, 54), two mounted divisions, and the Imperial Camel Corps Brigade. The Desert Column under General Chetwode comprised the two mounted divisions (each less one of its four brigades) the 53rd Division (Major-General Dallas) and two Light Car Patrols. General Dobell's headquarters were by now at El Arish, close up to the front; and it seems questionable whether the continued existence of the Desert Column as a mixed force of mounted men and infantry was the most suitable organisation. It might have been better

to form the mounted troops (Anzac and Imperial Divisions and Camel Corps Brigade) into a mounted corps, leaving all the infantry divisions directly under Eastern Force. But however the army was organised, an increase in its mobility was at the moment the prime consideration.

After the loss of his detachments at Magdhaba and Rafa, Kress von Kressenstein had entrenched and occupied with the remainder of his force a strong position at Wali Sheikh Nuran, just west of Shellal on the Wadi Ghuzze. Here he directly covered the Turkish railway to Beersheba and indirectly protected Gaza, which had also a small garrison. Reinforcements were obviously required to meet the British advance; by February, the 16th and 27th Divisions and the 3rd Cavalry Division (two weak regiments) had been added to Kress's force. He did not, however, consider himself strong enough to hold his advanced position in front of Shellal as well as Gaza; so on March 5th, when our railway was approaching Rafa and an attack on Wali Sheikh Nuran was being planned, he suddenly evacuated the position and withdrew to the Gaza—Beersheba line. He placed detachments in Gaza and Beersheba, and held the bulk of his force in hand at Tel esh Sheria and Jemmameh (near Huj), till the direction of the British advance declared itself. After the middle of March, warned by reports of the British movements, he strengthened the garrison of Gaza by a regiment of infantry and some batteries. It then consisted of seven battalions, five batteries (two Austrian, two Turkish, and one German), and some machine gun companies, two of which were German; in all, about 3,500 rifles and twenty guns. The 53rd Division, which had been held back at Jaffa in fear of a possible landing, was also ordered down to the Palestine front to meet the expected British attack. The German aviators in Kress's force had lately received some new and powerful aeroplanes, and these enjoyed a complete mastery over the slower British machines. Their continual bombing caused great annoyance and some losses, particularly to the mounted troops. Horse-lines are an obvious target from the air.

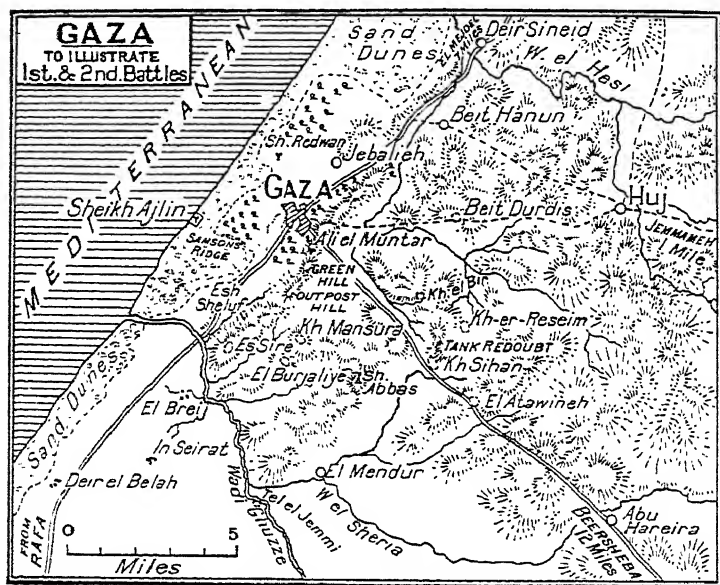
The withdrawal of the Turks from the Shellal position,

and their continued avoidance of battle, were a disappointment to General Dobell, a sanguine and energetic commander always anxious to engage his enemy. The retirement created in the minds of the British commanders the impression, which received some confirmation from other sources, that the enemy did not intend to risk an engagement even on the Gaza—Beersheba line, unless the situation changed in his favour. In the eyes of General Dobell, this supplied an additional argument in favour of the enterprise now being designed against Gaza—that it would force the enemy to action. His definite proposal for an attack on Gaza towards the end of March was accepted by General Murray, and preparations were begun.

The main difficulty was supply. In order to ensure surprise—and it was believed that unless the enemy was surprised he would again withdraw without a fight—it was necessary to strike while railhead was still at some distance from Gaza. As rapidity of decision was essential, a large force was required; in fact, practically the whole of the troops available were to be employed. By using every animal and vehicle, fifteen “trains” were improvised, just sufficient to give for a strictly limited period the necessary radius of action to the absolutely essential requirements of the force. The intention was to repeat the manœuvre of the Magdhaba and Rafa actions on a larger scale. Success before dark on the day of attack was considered an indispensable condition, since the trains could only carry ammunition, food and water for a twenty-four-hours’ battle. But if Gaza were taken, there was abundance of water in the wells there, and the force could receive its supplies by sea.

On the evening of March 25th, the force was assembled ready to move on Gaza; the Desert Column at Deir el Belah, the 54th Division about In Seirat, the 52nd Division at Khan Yunus, and the Camel Corps Brigade at Abasan el Kebir, just south-east of Khan Yunus. There was no indication that this forward concentration had attracted the attention of the Turks. In outline, the plan was for the mounted troops (including the Camel Brigade, attached to Desert Column for the operation), to form a screen north,

east, and south-east of Gaza, so as to prevent the retreat of the garrison and to hold off Turkish reinforcements, while the 53rd Division, strengthened by a call on one brigade of the 54th Division, assaulted Gaza. All these troops were under G.O.C. Desert Column, Sir Philip Chetwode. General Dobell retained under his own hand the 54th Division, which was to form a support to the mounted screen south-east of Gaza, and the 52nd Division, which was to form the general



MAP VII.

reserve and to protect the line of communications. The task of the force may be summed up thus : the mounted troops, numbering 11,000 (equivalent to about 6,000 rifles in the firing line) with thirty-two field guns and six mountain guns, would be extended over an arc of some fifteen miles to keep the ring for the fight at Gaza. Against this screen the enemy might bring forces estimated at about 15,000 rifles with forty to fifty guns ; none of these lay nearer than ten miles away, or further than seventeen. The southern part of the screen had the support of an infantry division (less one



brigade of infantry and two artillery brigades)\* say 8,000 rifles and twelve guns.

For the assault on Gaza, believed to contain 4,000 rifles and some twenty guns, there were available four infantry brigades, three artillery brigades, and some medium artillery, about 12,000 rifles, thirty-six field guns, and six 60-pdrs. Another infantry division (8,000 rifles, forty-four field guns) was in general reserve, but actually took no part in the fight. Numerically, therefore, the British had a sufficient advantage if their intelligence of the enemy's numbers and dispositions were approximately correct.† Their weak points were the great dissemination of the mounted troops to the north and east of Gaza, the limitation imposed by the time factor, and the natural strength of the Gaza position.

The town of Gaza is grouped on and around a small hill, which is some two miles inland from the sea. For about a mile to a mile and a half round the town lies a network of gardens and small fields, divided by tall thick cactus hedges, often ten feet high and up to five yards wide, more impenetrable than a barbed wire entanglement of the same size. This thorny maze made Gaza almost proof against direct attack from the south and constituted a strong inner line of resistance everywhere. Outside it Gaza was protected on the west down to the sea by a belt of tangled sand dunes. The topography on the east requires a more detailed description. About a mile from the town a narrow and irregular ridge ran from north-east to south-west. This was the famous Ali Muntar Ridge, the real key to the defences of the town. It received its name from a prominent knoll nearly due east of Gaza, on which stood a small white-domed building to mark the burial place of some holy man.‡ The ridge actually extends from about two miles north of Gaza,

\* One brigade and one artillery brigade of the 54th Division had been placed at the disposal of the 53rd Division. The 53rd and 54th Divisions had each only two brigades of artillery present. Only four guns of each 18-pdr. battery were present.

† Kress von Kressenstein gives his strength as 900 sabres, 12,700 rifles, 69 field guns, 78 machine guns. This presumably includes the garrison of Gaza. The official Turkish figures are 16,000 rifles, 74 guns, 65 machine guns.

‡ Ali Muntar is the traditional spot to which Samson carried the pillars of Gaza.

right down to the Wadi Ghuzze, but the name of Ali Muntar Ridge was only applied to the northern part, which ended a mile and a half south-west of Ali Muntar. The portion south of this was known at the time of the first battle under the name of the Es Sire Ridge. On either side of the Es Sire Ridge lie two detached features ; that to the east was called the El Burjaliye Ridge, while the lower one to the west was known as the Esh Sheluf Ridge. East of the Ali Muntar Ridge, the ground is open and undulating for about 1,000 yards, then it rises to another parallel line of heights running north-east and south-west, of which the southern portion was known as the Sh. Abbas Ridge. South of the line Sh. Abbas—Mansura (on the El Burjaliye Ridge) the ground is much water-worn and hollowed into numerous wadis draining into the Wadi Ghuzze.\* The Turks had a strong prepared position on the Ali Muntar Ridge and trenches at the edge of the cactus area south and south-west of the town.

The mounted troops were to be across the Wadi Ghuzze by 5 a.m. of the morning of March 26th, the Anzacs being directed on Beit Durdis, between Huj and Gaza, the Imperial Mounted Division on Kh. el Reseim. The Camel Brigade, operating from El Mendur, was to complete the screen up to the Wadi Ghuzze. The 53rd Division was to follow the mounted troops across the Wadi, sending its 160th Brigade on to the Es Sire Ridge, the 158th Brigade to Mansura at the northern end of the El Burjaliye Ridge, the 159th Brigade to reserve just east of the crossing place at El Breij. A detachment of one battalion and two squadrons under Colonel Money was to demonstrate against the Turkish line in the sand hills between Gaza and the sea. The 54th Division was to take up a position on the Sh. Abbas Ridge facing east ; it was to hold one brigade and one artillery

\* The main features of the ground south and east of Gaza can perhaps best be conveyed by the following simile : Spread out the right hand, palm upwards, thumb and fingers fully extended : imagine the ball of the thumb to represent the hill on which Gaza stands, and the right and left edges of the hand to represent respectively the Ali Muntar Ridge and the parallel ridge further east : then the palm of the hand will be the open plain between these two ridges : the outspread fingers will be the four ridges—Esh Sheluf (index finger), Es Sire (middle finger), El Burjaliye (ring finger), Sh. Abbas (little finger) : the spaces between the fingers may be taken as wadis running down to the Wadi Ghuzze.

brigade near the Wadi Ghuzze in readiness to support the 53rd Division.

The headquarters both of Eastern Force and of Desert Column were fixed at In Seirat ; those of the 53rd Division at El Breij, west of the wadi. The Commander-in-Chief, Sir Archibald Murray, had come up to El Arish, where he had a command post on his train. The position of these headquarters and the system of command in this battle were certainly not ideal. They were dictated mainly by the very limited means of communication available. It is permissible to consider what modifications could usefully have been made had more signalling material and personnel been at hand. Generals Dobell and Chetwode practically duplicated the same work and responsibilities at their joint headquarters. It might have been better had the mounted troops only been under General Chetwode. He would then, from a headquarters well east of the wadi, have been free to concentrate his attention outwards towards the approach of the enemy reinforcements. The whole of the infantry could have remained immediately under General Dobell, who could have closely directed the conduct of the attack on Gaza. Alternatively, if the arc on which the mounted troops were spread was considered too wide for a single command in the peculiar conditions, the Camel Brigade might have been placed under G.O.C. 54th Division, who would then have been responsible for the approaches to Gaza from the south-east, *i.e.*, from Beersheba and Tel Esh Sheria, while General Chetwode with the Anzac and Imperial Mounted Divisions held the routes from Huj and from the north. In any case the headquarters of the 53rd Division would have been better placed east of the wadi, had the need for economising telephone cable not been so insistent. If the G.O.C. had not had to make so prolonged a journey from his headquarters in the morning to reconnoitre for his attack and to interview his brigadiers, and had he been in the evening in closer touch with his brigades, the issue of the battle might well have been different. The Commander-in-Chief, who had no troops directly under his orders, could exercise little control over the fight from El Arish.

Dawn broke on March 26th as the troops, which had left their bivouacs of the previous night at 2.30 a.m., were crossing the great wadi; with it there rolled up a dense sea fog which lasted till 7 a.m. (7.30 a.m. by some accounts). In spite of it—possibly assisted by the concealment it gave—the mounted troops reached their allotted positions with little delay. The leading squadrons of the Anzac Mounted Division were at Beit Durdis at 9 a.m., and had practically closed the cordon to the north by the occupation of Jebalieh at 10.30 a.m. In the process they captured the commander and staff of the 53rd Turkish Division, who was driving into Gaza from the north, quite unconscious of the possibility of danger. The Imperial Mounted Division reached its cruising ground at Kh. el Reseim by 10 a.m., and the Camel Brigade was also in position by that time. It was on the movements of the 53rd Division that the fog imposed really serious delay; two priceless hours were lost in waiting for it to clear. Even so, the brigades had reached their first assembly points by 8.30 a.m., and were then within 5,000 to 6,000 yards of their goal, the Ali Muntar position. Their attack was not, however, launched till near midday. The rapid staging of an infantry attack over unknown ground is a high test of the training of staff and troops. To the onlooker, it often seems almost incredibly slow. So many processes have to be carried out, the reconnaissance of commanders, the elaboration of the plan and issue of detailed orders, the ranging of the artillery, the disposition of the means of intercommunication, of medical aid and so forth; and these processes have to be repeated in each successive lower formation. A chief of even the most fiery and energetic temperament cannot ensure rapidity of execution unless his own staff and those of the units under him are fully practised. The 53rd Division had not been in action since Gallipoli, and was, maybe, "short of a gallop." To Chetwode, used to the more summary procedure of cavalry, it seemed that time was being wasted. He sent message after message to urge on General Dallas the importance of rapid action. At last, a little before noon, the attack started. The 158th Brigade was directed on Ali Muntar over the open plain from Man-

surra, the 160th up the little less exposed Es Sire Ridge. The battalions advanced under a galling fire with great gallantry and steadiness, and gradually closed to within a few hundred yards of the Ali Muntar Knoll. But here they encountered the first cactus hedges and progress became slow. The reserve brigade, the 159th, was soon put in on the right of the 158th.

Chetwode had meanwhile decided to hasten the fall of Gaza by throwing in the mounted troops from the north. General Chauvel was ordered at 1 p.m. to assault with his Anzacs. The Imperial Mounted Division was to extend northwards and take over from Chauvel his screening work, while the Camel Brigade was similarly to take over a share of the Imperial Mounted Division's responsibilities. The Anzacs began their assault at 4 p.m.,\* and, in spite of the enclosed ground and of the cactus hedges, drove steadily on into the northern outskirts of the town. At about the same hour General Dallas put in the 161st Brigade of the 54th Division, which had reached him at 3 p.m. after some intricate and vexatious wanderings. He directed it to advance between the 158th and 160th Brigades against a knoll south of Ali Muntar afterwards known as Green Hill, from which a bitter enfilade fire was checking the attackers of Ali Muntar itself. These final efforts were successful; at 5.30 p.m. Green Hill was taken, and as the sun began to set at 6 p.m. the whole Turkish position along the Ali Muntar Ridge was in British hands. At about the same hour the 2nd A.L.H. Brigade and the New Zealand Mounted Brigade, having pushed through the fields and hedges, were on the northern outskirts of the town itself. They joined hands on Ali Muntar with the infantry. The victory so hardly struggled for was won, but an hour too late.

General Dobell and General Chetwode had consulted during the afternoon, and had resolved that if Gaza had not been captured by nightfall the fight should be broken off. This decision was actuated partly by considerations of water supply and partly by the gradually increasing pressure of the Turkish forces which were converging on Gaza. At 4 o'clock some 300 infantry were seen advancing from

\* General Chetwode's 1 p.m. order had taken an hour to reach General Chauvel.

about Deir Sineid; an hour later a column estimated at 3,000 infantry and two squadrons was moving south-west between Huj and Gaza, and some 7,000 infantry, preceded by cavalry, were approaching from Abu Hareira, on the Gaza—Beersheba road. Reports from the mounted troops indicated that the pressure on them was becoming severe. The margin of space for voluntary withdrawal was, moreover, a small one, since a sufficient corridor had to be kept open for the retirement of the squadrons north of Gaza. At 5.30 p.m. the 54th Division was ordered back from the Sh. Abbas Ridge to the Mansurah Ridge as a preparatory measure of precaution, so as to be nearer to the 53rd Division. There seems to have been a staff blunder somewhere, as this move was not made known to the commander of the 53rd Division.

At a little after six o'clock, as the sun went down, General Dobell, after consultation with General Chetwode, issued orders for the mounted troops, whose horses had not had water all day, to withdraw to the Wadi Ghuzze. At this time even 53rd Division headquarters did not yet know whether the final assault on Ali Muntar had been successful or not; and even if it had carried the position a labyrinth of cactus lay between the ridge and the town. Should the enemy still show fight—and there was nothing to indicate that all resistance was broken—a continuance of the battle would involve a large part of the force in intricate and hazardous country on a dark night, with hostile reinforcements—so it was believed—pressing close in on the flank and rear. It was not till a little before midnight that an intercepted Turkish wireless message, deciphered in Cairo, reached Dobell; it showed that the Gaza garrison had been indeed beaten and had intended to surrender if further pressed. It was later still when the unhampered return of the mounted troops established the fact that nightfall had brought the march of the Turkish columns from Huj and Hareira to a halt.

It might yet have been possible to complete the capture of the Gaza garrison at dawn next morning, before the remainder of the Turks could have intervened; but mis-

understandings and mistakes were meanwhile rendering such a possibility remote. The withdrawal of the mounted troops left the right flank of the 53rd Division exposed; General Dobell's intention was to safeguard the exposed flank by effecting a junction between the right of the 53rd and the left of the 54th Division. It was with this object that he had ordered the retirement of the latter division to the Mansura Ridge. At 7 p.m. Chetwode ordered General Dallas to withdraw his right so as to gain touch with the 54th Division. Dallas protested vigorously but he was overruled. Owing to some oversight he had not been informed of the move of the 54th Division, and believed it still to be at Sh. Abbas. Under this impression, he ordered a complete withdrawal to a line south of Gaza, practically to the line from which his attack on Ali Muntar had started that morning. Not till midnight—too late to countermand the movement—did he discover the true position of the 54th Division, and it was not till 5 a.m. on the 27th that General Chetwode realised what had occurred. He promptly ordered General Dallas to reoccupy the Ali Muntar Ridge. The 160 and 161 Brigades were ordered forward, but it was too late. Their advanced bodies reoccupied Ali Muntar and Green Hill, but soon lost them to a strong Turkish counter-attack. The enemy had taken heart of grace at his almost miraculous deliverance and was now in no mood for surrender. Reinforcements, too, had reached him. By 10 a.m. on the 27th the situation was that the 54th Division and the 53rd Division were back to back, the former on the Mansura Ridge, facing east, the latter on the Es Sire Ridge, facing west towards Gaza; their left and right flanks respectively were thrown back to form a blunted apex facing north-west in the open ground east of Ali Muntar. The Camel Corps Brigade was about El Mendur. The Turks were in strength on Ali Muntar, and threatened counter-attack against the apex of the salient formed by the two British divisions. The enemy force from Hareira had occupied Sh. Abbas, whence it could shell the rear of the Es Sire Ridge. There was no longer any hope of taking Gaza, and the existing position was clearly untenable.

During the evening of the 27th the line was withdrawn to the west bank of the Wadi Ghuzze. So ended a very remarkable engagement.

The British casualties amounted to 523 killed, 2,932 wounded, and 512 missing—a total of just under 4,000. Two guns and 900 Turkish prisoners were captured. The Turkish casualties amounted to about 1,500 less (300 killed, 1,085 wounded, 1,061 missing). As usual, each side overestimated at the time the losses inflicted on the other. Sir Archibald Murray, in his telegram after the engagement, put the Turkish casualties at between 6,000 and 7,000; in his final despatch some months later he gave the figure as 8,000. The Turks estimated our losses at 6,000, and actually claimed to have buried 1,500 and captured 250.

Kress von Kressenstein in his account of the battle says that the first reports of attack were received at 8 a.m. He at once ordered towards the battlefield all Turkish troops within reach. The leading regiment of the 53rd Division (which was marching down from Jaffa to Gaza) was due to reach El Medjel on the morning of the 26th; it was ordered to hasten its march on to Gaza. The 3rd Division (about 5,000 rifles and thirty guns) at Huj was directed on Ali Muntar, the 16th Division (5,000 to 6,000 rifles, twenty guns) on Sh. Abbas and to the south of Gaza, and the Beersheba group (about 2,000 rifles and sabres) by Shellal on Khan Yunus. It took some time, however, to get these bodies on the move, owing to what Kress calls "typically Turkish" delays. When darkness came they were hardly half-way to Gaza. Kress had not sufficient confidence in the ability of his subordinate commanders or in the training of the troops to commit them to night operations. He acquiesced, therefore, in the cessation of action at nightfall, at which time he had every reason to believe that Gaza was in British hands. Next day, when he discovered the position of affairs, Kress wished to initiate a general attack with all available troops against the British, but Djemal Pasha refused to countenance the proposal.

Attention has already been called in the course of the narrative to some features of this very interesting failure.



It was certainly not the fault of the troops, who attacked with great spirit and determination, nor of the plan, which was well and boldly conceived. Loss of time was the main cause of the loss of victory. The delay due to the fog was an "act of God" which could not have been foreseen; the stout resistance put up by "the King's enemies" was a factor which could not have been altered. But certain other causes of delay could have been insured against by a more practised staff. Staff work in the field might well be defined as the art of saving time, and, like other arts, is mastered only by constant and laborious practice.

The similarity between this action and those at Magdhaba and Rafa will be noticed. Once again the crowning act of victory was achieved just as the order to withdraw was given. In the two previous engagements the field of battle had been sufficiently circumscribed for the responsible commander to observe that the winning stroke had been made in time to cancel the order to break off the fight. At Gaza the fighting was spread over so wide and so intricate an area that the situation could not easily be ascertained nor quickly communicated. This is indeed the chief problem to be solved on the modern battlefield: how to obtain rapid and accurate information of the progress of events. It is unlikely that it ever will receive complete solution, for as means of intercommunication improve, so does the area of the battlefield increase.

The decision to withdraw the mounted troops has naturally been much criticised; but on the information available at the time it was fully justified. The issue of the fight at Ali Muntar was not known, the enemy was represented to be pressing in the mounted screen, and the horses were reported as suffering from lack of water. It is curious that all three protagonists in this struggle accepted failure at almost the same moment: General Dobell issued the recall to his mounted force, Kress von Kressentsein halted the relieving columns, and Major Tiller, the German Commandant of Gaza, blew up his wireless station and resigned himself to the prospect of captivity. In war a last ounce of optimism is sometimes a better general reserve than many men.

The capture of Ali Muntar Ridge by the 53rd Division and the 161st Brigade of the 54th Division will bear comparison with the classic exploits of British infantry. The approach was over bare ground against an enemy strongly posted and entrenched, with numerous machine guns and a powerful artillery. All the advantages of observation and of concealment lay with the enemy. The guns supporting the attack were few,\* and the narrow ridge on which lay the enemy's main position was a difficult target; the hostile trenches were hard to detect. The last part of the assault was blind fighting uphill through cactus hedges against unseen machine guns and riflemen. A pitiless Eastern sun beat down on men who had already marched far before deploying for attack. There was no shade and no water. Yet these four brigades pressed quietly and steadily on over that exposed plain, up that steep ridge, and through that maze of cactus hedges, till an enemy whose skill and stoutness in defence are universally admitted gave way to them and yielded up his position. Little finesse was possible in this assault. Its success was a triumph for cool, practised platoon leading and for straightforward disciplined valour. It is an action worth remembering when tempted to believe that infantry to-day are powerless against a prepared position unless they be convoyed by tanks or be supported by an overwhelming mass of artillery:

### 3. *The Second Battle of Gaza* †

About a fortnight before the first battle of Gaza two events had occurred which profoundly affected the other two fronts on which Turkey was engaged—Armenia and Mesopotamia. The Russian Revolution broke out on March 9th, and General Maude crowned his skilful operations on the Tigris by the capture of Baghdad on March 11th. Russia's change of Government was at first heralded by her democratic allies as an event which betokened a more vigorous prosecution of the war; they did not realise that the Russian masses were infinitely more wearied of their war than of their Tzar. Our War Cabinet was endeavouring at the time to combine

\* Twenty-four 18-prs., twelve 4.5 howitzers, six 60-prs.

† Map VII., p. 72.

the further relations of General Maude with those of the Russian Commander-in-chief in the Caucasus, the Grand Duke Nicholas, who had agreed to advance on Mosul. It was hoped that this would finally drive the Turkish armies out of Mesopotamia and end the campaign there. The Premier, Mr. Lloyd George, had a constant vision of Turkey suing for a separate peace. Sir Archibald Murray's strangely complacent report of the Gaza battle, arriving at this moment, seemed to give that vision a sudden prospect of substance. If, at the same time as Russian and Briton swept Mesopotamia clear of Turks, a great advance could be made in Palestine, Turkey would surely be ready for terms, especially if Germany were rapidly losing ground in the West. And there were high expectations of decisive success in France, where the Germans were already in retreat over a wide front. The Cabinet was in a mood of optimism. On March 30th a telegram was sent to General Murray indicating Jerusalem as an immediate objective of his army.

Sir Archibald Murray was undoubtedly taken aback at this unexpected extension of his role. In his reply he expressed his doubts on the feasibility of any rapid advance on Jerusalem, and drew attention once again to his unvarying estimate of the troops required—five full infantry divisions. The War Cabinet was, however, determined on a vigorous effort to dispose of Turkey. They had some grounds for believing that the existing strength of General Murray's forces justified their instructions for a speedy advance. The maximum fighting strength that the enemy could develop in southern Palestine was estimated at 30,000, of whom probably not more than 20,000 to 25,000 were immediately available. The British forces had at least a 50 per cent. advantage in infantry and guns, besides their overwhelming superiority in mounted troops; and their fighting capacity was, according to their commander's account of the late battle, greatly superior to that of their adversaries. General Murray loyally accepted his role, but he obviously did so with some misgiving, although he expressed himself hopeful of capturing Gaza and of conducting a successful campaign in Palestine. The truth is that,

with his headquarters at Cairo, he was not properly in touch with the situation at the front, and that his reports in turn misled the War Office.

The direction of the railway, which early in April reached Deir el Belah—eight or nine miles from Gaza and now General Dobell's headquarters—limited the scope of any operation to be initiated at once. This must be along the coast, and must begin with a fresh assault on Gaza. It would, however, necessarily be a very different undertaking from the previous attack. The advantage of surprise had been lost. Not only had the enemy increased the garrison and extended and strengthened the defences of Gaza itself, but he had obviously no intention of again allowing the British mounted troops an unimpeded passage between the different portions of his force. He was hastily closing the gap between Gaza and Beersheba by a series of redoubts designed to cover the whole front as far as Sheria against penetration. General Dobell's attack would thus be purely frontal against a strong position. The first essential was an increase of artillery. At the First Gaza the 53rd and 54th Divisions had each been short of an artillery brigade, and it had only been possible to bring half the medium artillery into action. For the second battle there were available: thirty-two field guns with the mounted divisions; six mountain guns with the Camel Brigade; three divisional artilleries,\* one of eight 4·5-inch howitzers and thirty-six 18-pdrs., and two of eight 4·5-inch howitzers and twenty-eight 18-pdrs.;† total twenty-four howitzers, ninety-two guns; three batteries of 60-pdrs., twelve guns; a battery of two 8-inch howitzers and two 6-inch howitzers—a grand total of 170 pieces of artillery, of which only sixteen were medium and over, little enough for so extended a front of attack. In addition the French battleship *Requin*, and two British monitors were to join in the bombardment. Two weapons entirely new to this theatre were to be employed, tanks and gas. It was in fact to be as far as possible a battle in the grand style as practised on the Western front.

\* The 74th Division had as yet no artillery.

† Two 18-pdr. batteries in each of the 53rd and 54th Divisions were short of one section.

Not only, however, were the material means scanty, but the force as a whole was unacquainted with the latest uses and processes of siege warfare. Troops had hurriedly to be instructed in co-operation with tanks; trench maps had to be prepared; a formal artillery plan had to be evolved, complicated by questions of naval co-operation and of the proper employment of the novelties of gas and smoke shell; the meagre allowance of aircraft\* had to be eked out over the many tasks required of them. There were also preparations peculiar to the theatre, of which the eternal water question was the most arduous. The first fortnight in April, 1917, was indeed a busy one for Eastern Force.

If the Turks ever had the intention to retire from Gaza and Beersheba without a fight, the result of the first battle changed their mind. The whole of the 3rd Division now formed the garrison of Gaza; the 16th Division returned to Tel esh Sheria; while the 53rd Division and the 79th Regiment formed a group between them. A detachment of two battalions and a battery held Beersheba; the 3rd Cavalry Division was in reserve near Huj. Altogether Kress had at his disposal in the front line over 18,000 rifles, eighty-six machine guns, and 101 guns.†

The Turkish line round Gaza ran from the sea across three to four thousand yards of sandhills on to a feature about two miles south-west of the town known as Samson's Ridge; south of the town it passed through gardens and fields enclosed by cactus hedges till it ascended the Ali Muntar Ridge at a place named Outpost Hill, about a mile and a half south of the Ali Muntar Knoll. The ridge between Outpost Hill and Ali Muntar was the real core of the defence; the names given to the trench systems here—The Maze, The Labryinth, and the Warren—testify to the enclosed nature of the ground and to the elaboration of the works.

East of Ali Muntar there was a gap of some 800 to 1,000 yards of bare plain, crossed by fire from the Ali Muntar Ridge and from the next group of works, known as Beer

\* Only twenty-five serviceable aeroplanes were available.

† This is the official Turkish estimate. Kress's own figures are 900

trenches. Then came the formidable Tank Redoubt—as it was subsequently called—on the crest of a ridge some four thousand yards east of Ali Muntar. The next summit was also crowned by a strong group of works, the Atawineh Redoubt. Further east still were the Hareira and Sheria systems. The whole constituted a really strong defensive position, trenched with the usual Turkish skill and industry. The approaches lay up open slopes, and the various groups of works were so arranged as to support each other by enfilade fire. General Dobell's task was no easy one.

The plan of his battle was simple. It was to be conducted in two stages. In the first stage the infantry were to secure a line from the sea to the Sh. Abbas Ridge within easy striking distance of the main defences of Gaza. The line gained was to be consolidated and the heavy artillery moved forward before the main attack, which constituted the second stage, was launched. In this the 54th Division, with the Imperial Camel Corps Brigade attached, was to assault on the front Kh. Sihan—Kh. el Bir; this included Tank Redoubt and the Beer group of trenches. When these were taken, the division was to pivot on its left and was to swing up against that part of the Ali Muntar Ridge which lay north of the Gaza—Beersheba road. The 52nd Division was to attack astride the Es Sire Ridge to Ali Muntar. The 53rd Division was to advance along the coast against the south-western defences of Gaza. The Desert Column, which for this battle was composed of the two mounted divisions only, was to carry out a containing attack on the right of the infantry as far east as Hareira, and was to hold itself ready for pursuit should the infantry attack succeed. The 74th Division, which had now joined the force but was without artillery, formed the general reserve.

The first stage began early on April 17th; the 54th and 52nd Divisions crossed the Wadi Ghuzze, and reached their allotted positions, Sh. Abbas—Mansura—Kurd Hill (on the Es Sire Ridge), with little opposition and few casualties, though one tank was destroyed by artillery fire. The 18th was spent in consolidation and in preparations for the final stage, which was to take place on the 19th. On that date

the bombardment, now strengthened by naval assistance, opened at 5.30 a.m. At 7.15 a.m. the 53rd Division advanced to the attack along the coast, and a quarter of an hour later the 54th and 52nd Divisions launched their assaults. Farther to the right the Imperial Mounted Division made a dismounted attack on the Atawineh group of works, while the Anzac Mounted Division protected the flank and demonstrated against the Hareira Redoubt.

The battle does not require a long description. Though the various attacks were pressed with the utmost gallantry, nowhere was any sufficient success obtained to make the capture of the Turkish position appear at any time probable. The gas shells produced little result, the few tanks were disabled by artillery fire or broke down, and the bombardment over the wide frontage of assault was quite insufficient to subdue either the Turkish machine guns or guns. On the right of the 54th Division some of the 161st Brigade and the Camel Brigade, led by a tank, reached the work afterwards known as Tank Redoubt, and held it for a while against heavy odds, and still further to the right the Camel Brigade penetrated to Kh. Sihan. The left of the 54th Division also reached the Turkish front line, but in face of the heavy enfilade fire from Ali Muntar, could get no further. The fighting on the front of the 52nd Division centred all day round Outpost Hill, about half-way to Ali Muntar. A tank reached it, but was hit by artillery and burnt out before the infantry could make good the success. At about 10 a.m. parties of the 155th Brigade gained the hill, but established only a precarious hold and could get no further all day against the machine guns concealed in an intricate maze of cactus hedges. Late in the evening the hill was evacuated to avoid a dangerous salient in the line. The 53rd Division carried Samson's Ridge at 1.30 p.m. after several unsuccessful efforts, but could make no deeper impression in the Turkish defence.

Early in the afternoon it was obvious that the attack was unlikely to succeed without further support. To deploy more infantry would merely increase the casualties; the whole of the artillery was engaged and the supply of ammu-

dition was already causing some anxiety. The action was accordingly broken off in the evening with the intention of resuming it under cover of a fresh bombardment at dawn on the 20th. Reports which came in during the night, however, convinced General Dobell that the prospects of success were very doubtful; and in the early morning he cancelled the orders for the renewal of the attack. The ground gained was consolidated. The Turks made several vigorous local counter-attacks during the 19th; and Kress von Kressenstein planned a general counterstroke along the whole front for the 20th. Djemal Pasha, however, once again refused his assent.

The British casualties were close on 6,500, of which nearly half fell on the 54th Division. The 52nd Division also lost heavily. The Turkish losses appear to have amounted to a little over 2,000. They captured six officers and 266 men.

The fate of an attack against positions so strong and a foe so tenacious was hardly surprising. The infantry assault had a frontage of about 15,000 yards, and the guns available to support it were no more than 150; the tanks and gas shells were too few to produce the expected results.\* It is possible that a greater concentration of effort against the Ali Muntar Ridge, which was the key of the position, might have availed to carry that feature, and have given the best chance of success. It would, however, have been too pronounced a salient to hold for long, and ultimate victory would have depended on the extent to which its possession would have facilitated the rapid advance of troops on either side.

#### *4. Events from April to July, 1917*

The Turks were naturally elated by their double success at Gaza. A little earlier in the year the prospects of withstanding the British invasion had seemed gloomy in the extreme. Now there was no question of further retirement, and they settled down to the completion and organisation of their position. It extended along the Gaza—Beersheba road as far east as Sheria, with Beersheba held as a detached post. A branch of the railway was begun from Et Tineh towards Gaza and Huj; a second position was laid out on the Wadi Hesi north

\* Only eight tanks (not in the best condition) had been sent to Egypt.



of Gaza ; and the water supply was improved. During April and May, the 7th and 54th Divisions and another Austrian battery joined Kress's force. The 54th Division took over the centre of the line, relieving the 53rd Division, which went to Gaza to form with the 3rd Division the XXII. Corps. The 7th Division remained in reserve. Sir Archibald Murray estimated the Turkish numbers at this time at 33,000 rifles, 2,200 sabres, 130 machine guns, and 120 guns, which was probably approximately correct.

General Chetwode succeeded General Dobell at Eastern Force headquarters shortly after the second battle of Gaza. The command of the mounted troops passed to General Chauvel, from whom General Chaytor, a New Zealander, took over the Anzac Mounted Division. The British line ran from Sh. Ajlin on the sea by Samson's Ridge and Blazed Hill (just south of Outpost Hill) to Mansura and Sh. Abbas. At Sh. Abbas close contact with the enemy ceased, and the line turned sharp back, to reach the Wadi Ghuzze at Tel el Jemmi, south-west of El Mendur. Thence the Wadi was held as far as Gamli by a series of detached posts. The position was secure enough ; but the spirit of the force was depressed. The two failures before Gaza had shaken the confidence of the men in the high command and in themselves ; and the prospect of stagnant trench warfare during a hot summer, in a region so far from any opportunities of relaxation, was not calculated to raise their spirits.

The result of the Gaza operations had also come as a shock to the optimism of the War Cabinet. It was obvious that a considerable reinforcement would be required to set General Murray's army in motion again. In an appreciation telegraphed home immediately on the conclusion of the second battle he had enumerated the essential requirements for the resumption of an offensive into Palestine—two more complete divisions and additional artillery. The Cabinet had to decide whether to content itself with the security already obtained for Egypt and to forego any hopes of a successful invasion of Palestine ; or to increase their commitments and efforts on this front. Several reasons urged them to the second conclusion. The failure of the French offensive in

Champagne tended to confirm Mr. Lloyd George in his search for "a way round" the apparent deadlock on the Western front. News of the Turkish concentration for the recapture of Baghdad was beginning to arrive and demanded some counter-measure. The General Staff were glad to find an excuse for reducing our force engaged in the unprofitable Salonika adventure.\* And, lastly, the natural doggedness of the British race makes us unwilling to accept a repulse as final. So the Cabinet decided to reinforce the E.E.F. from the Salonika theatre.

Meanwhile the only incident on the Palestine border was the destruction of the Turkish railway extension south of Beersheba to Auja. The enemy had abandoned its use in January, but was now reported to be picking up the rails (of which material he was very short) for use on the new Et Tineh—Gaza branch. General Chetwode arranged a raid by the mounted troops to prevent this. Special demolition parties were trained to assist the R.E. The raid was made in two columns; the Engineer squadrons of the Anzac and Imperial Mounted Divisions, escorted by the 1st A.L.H. Brigade, marched from Shellal to Asluj, on the night of May 22nd/23rd, while the Camel Corps Brigade with its Field Troop simultaneously moved on Auja from Rafa. The Imperial Mounted Division covered the operation by a demonstration towards Beersheba. The raid was entirely successful. During the forenoon of May 23rd every rail was destroyed over thirteen miles of line, and six bridges were wrecked. The columns then withdrew, without molestation by the enemy.†

The 7th and 8th Mounted Brigades arrived at the beginning of June from Salonika. The mounted troops were now reorganised into three Mounted Divisions, viz.:

Anzac: 1st A.L.H., 2nd A.L.H., N.Z.M.R. Brigades—  
Major-General E. W. C. Chaytor.

\* "As divisions were apparently not to be got away except on Mr. Lloyd George's terms, the General Staff could only acquiesce in their going to Palestine, where they would at any rate enjoy a better climate and be under British control."—"Soldiers and Statesmen," Vol. II., p. 143.)

† An interesting description of the method employed to secure the desired speed of destruction will be found on p. 112 of "The New Zealanders in Sinai and Palestine."

Australian (late Imperial) : 3rd A.L.H., 4th A.L.H., 5th Mounted Brigades—Major-General H. W. Hodgson.

Yeomanry : 6th, 8th, 22nd Mounted Brigades—Major-General G. de S. Barrow.

The remaining Mounted Brigade, the 7th, was kept as an independent brigade directly under Eastern Force headquarters.

The 60th Division and additional artillery were also under orders from Salonika, and units from India and Aden were arriving to form, with others already in Egypt, the nucleus of a 75th Division. Further additions to the E.E.F. at this time were contingents of French and Italian troops, their mission being mainly political. France claimed special rights in Palestine and Syria, and had no mind that these countries should be occupied by a purely British force. Diplomatic negotiations over their future disposal when wrested from the Turks had indeed already resulted in the Sykes—Picot treaty. The Italians asserted hereditary ecclesiastical prerogatives in connection with the Christian churches at Jerusalem and Bethlehem, and sent a contingent of Bersaglieri.

While these reinforcements were arriving the communications of the force were being improved. A branch of the railway from Rafa to Shellal was begun at the end of April, in order to broaden the front and to make operations against the Turkish left possible. The capacity of the railway from Egypt to support an increased force also came under review. In its existing state it would suffice for the maintenance of five divisions, eight mounted brigades, the Camel Corps Brigade and all transport and lines of communication troops ; if, however, the Cabinet proposed to send a much larger force for the autumn campaign, the doubling of the railway from Kantara was recommended.

When they resolved on a renewal of the invasion of Palestine, the War Cabinet resolved also on a change of leaders. Their choice fell on General Sir Edmund Allenby, the commander of the Third Army in France, who had just won a striking victory at Arras. He arrived in Egypt on June 27th and took over command of the Egyptian Expeditionary

Force on June 28th. The association was to bring great glory alike to troops and to leader. The brilliant series of victories won by General Allenby has tended to overshadow the earlier achievements of the army under the guidance of Sir Archibald Murray. But General Allenby himself never failed to recognise how well the path had been prepared for him by his predecessor. In his despatch of June 28th, 1919, in which he summed up his own campaigns, he wrote :

“I desire to express my indebtedness to my predecessor, Lieutenant-General Sir A. J. Murray, who, by his bridging of the desert between Egypt and Palestine, laid the foundations for the subsequent advances of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force. I reaped the fruits of his foresight and strategical imagination, which brought the waters of the Nile to the borders of Palestine, planned the skilful military operations by which the Turks were driven from strong positions in the desert over the frontier of Egypt, and carried a standard gauge railway to the gates of Gaza. The organisation he created, both in Sinai and in Egypt, stood all tests and formed the corner-stone of my successes.”

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## ORDER OF BATTLE

### FIRST BATTLE OF GAZA

#### DESERT COLUMN

*Australian and New Zealand Mounted Division* (Major-General Sir H. G. Chauvel).

2nd Australian Light Horse Brigade.

New Zealand Mounted Rifle Brigade.

22nd Mounted Brigade.

*Imperial Mounted Division* (Major-General H. W. Hodgson).

3rd Australian Light Horse Brigade.

5th Mounted Brigade.

6th Mounted Brigade.

*53rd (Welsh) Division* (Major-General A. G. Dallas).

158th Infantry Brigade—

1, 5th R.W. Fus., 1, 6th R.W. Fus., 1, 7th R.W. Fus.,

1, 1st Hereford Regt.

## 159th Infantry Brigade—

1/4th Cheshire Regt., 1/7th Cheshire Regt., 1/4th Welsh Regt., 1/5th Welsh Regt.

## 160th Infantry Brigade—

1/4th R. Sussex Regt., 2/4th R. West Surrey Regt.,  
2/4th R.W. Kent Regt., 2/10th Middlesex Regt.

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*Troops directly under command of G.O.C. Eastern Force (Lieut.-General Sir C. M. Dobell).*

*Imperial Camel Brigade.*

1st (Australian and New Zealand) Battalion (1st, 3rd, 4th and 15th Coys.).

2nd (Imperial) Battalion (5th, 6th, 7th and 8th Coys.).

3rd (Australian and New Zealand) Battalion (11th, 12th, 14th and 16th Coys.).

## 52nd (Lowland) Division (Major-General W. E. B. Smith).

## 155th Infantry Brigade—

1/4th R. Scots Fus., 1/5th R. Scots Fus., 1/4th K.O.S.B.,  
1/5th K.O.S.B.

## 156th Infantry Brigade—

1/4th R. Scots, 1/7th R. Scots, 1/7th Scottish Rifles,  
1/8th Scottish Rifles.

## 157th Infantry Brigade—

1/5th H.L.I., 1/6th H.L.I., 1/7th H.L.I., 1/5th A. and  
S. Highlanders.

## 54th (East Anglian) Division (Major-General S. W. Hare).

## 161st Infantry Brigade—

1/4th Essex Regt., 1/5th Essex Regt., 1/6th Essex Regt., 1/7th Essex Regt.

## 162nd Infantry Brigade—

1/5th Bedfordshire Regt., 1/4th Northampton Regt.,  
1/10th London Regt., 1/11th London Regt.

## 163rd Infantry Brigade—

1/4th Norfolk Regt., 1/5th Norfolk Regt., 1/5th Suffolk Regt., 1/8th Hampshire Regt.

## 74th (Yeomanry) Division (Major-General E. S. Girdwood).

## 229th Infantry Brigade (Brig.-General R. Hoare)—

16th Devonshire Regt., 12th Somerset L.I., 14th Royal  
Highlanders.

*Other Units engaged with Eastern Force—*

No. 7 Light Car Patrol.

Nos. 11 and 12 Armoured Motor Batteries.

5th Wing R.F.C.

## ARTILLERY

	60-pdrs.	4·5-in. howitzers.	18-pdrs.	2·75-inch guns.
A. and N.Z. Mounted Division —4 Batteries R.H.A. (T.) (each four 18-pdrs.) . . .	—	—	16	—
Imperial Mounted Division —Ditto . . . . .	—	—	16	—
Imperial Camel Brigade— 1 Camel Pack Battery (six 2·75-inch) . . . . .	—	—	—	6
52nd Division—2 Brigades R.F.A. (each twelve 18-pdrs. and four 4·5-inch howitzers) 1 Brigade R.F.A. (twelve 18-pdrs.) . . . . .	—	8	24	—
53rd Division—Ditto . . . . .	—	8	36	—
54th Division—Ditto. . . . .	—	8	36	—
Army Troops—3 Batteries (each four 60-pdrs.) . . . .	12	—	—	—
	12	24	140	6
At First Gaza the 52nd Div. Arty. was not engaged, the third brigades of the 53rd and 54th Divisions were in the Suez Canal Defences, and only four guns of each 18-pdr. battery of the 53rd and 54th Divisions, and one section of each heavy battery were brought up. Therefore deduct . . . . .	6	8	76	—
Total at First Gaza* . . . .	6	16	64	6

\* The actual attack of the 53rd Division was supported by only six 60-pdrs., twelve 4·5-inch howitzers, and twenty-four 18-pdrs.

## THE SECOND PHASE—PALESTINE

### CHAPTER IV

#### THE THIRD BATTLE OF GAZA

“Superandæ erant duci nostro Turcorum pertinacia, Teutonum astutia, locorum iniquitas, aquarum denique inopia.”  
—(Oration to Lord Allenby on receiving an honorary degree at Oxford.)

1. *The Foundations of the Battle.*—General strategical situation—The “Yilderim” army—The British plan—Preparations and training—Move of “Yilderim” army to Palestine front—Strengths and dispositions of opposing forces.

2. *The Battle of Beersheba, October 31st, 1917.*—The defences of Beersheba—Plan of attack—Attack of XX. Corps—Action of Desert Mounted Corps—Charge of 4th A.L.H. Brigade—Comments on the battle.

3. *The Breaking of the Turkish Line.*—Attack by XXI. Corps on Gaza defences—Fighting at Tel el Khuweilfeh—Attack on the Sheria position, November 6th—Turkish retreat—Comments.

Order of Battle, E.E.F.—October, 1917.

(SEE MAPS VIII., IX., X., XI.)

#### 1. *The Foundations of the Battle*

The decision of the War Cabinet to reinforce the Egyptian Expeditionary Force and to undertake the conquest of Palestine was of outstanding consequence. It made this theatre the most important centre of conflict outside Europe for the remainder of the war; incidentally it involved the British Empire in fresh commitments and perplexities when the war was over. The reasons for the decision have already been briefly indicated, but require some further examination. Throughout the war there was an incessant conflict of views between “the Westerners”—those who held that every possible man and weapon should be mustered against the main army of the principal enemy, and that all outside commitments should be reduced to the minimum compatible with mere safety—and “the Easterners”—those who believed that the Western front was impenetrable to either combatant, and that victory could more easily be won by striking down Germany’s weaker allies and so gradually tightening the iron ring round Germany herself.

Mr. Lloyd George, now Prime Minister, was the most

persistent and persuasive advocate of the latter policy. He had now, too, an additional impulse towards his search for a success in Palestine. The spring campaign of 1917 had been bitterly disappointing for the Allies. Russia had collapsed, the great French offensive in Champagne had been a demoralising failure, and the submarine warfare was causing the gravest anxiety. The United States had, indeed, just entered the war, but it would be long before their military help could become effective. All hope of ending the war in 1917 was gone. The Premier believed, rightly or wrongly, that some striking military success was needed to sustain, in this fourth year of war, the endurance of the civil population. It was this belief that prompted him to say to General Allenby before his departure to Egypt that "he wanted Jerusalem as a Christmas present for the British nation." This same conviction was repeated in a telegram sent to General Allenby in August, in which he was instructed to press the Turks in order, among other reasons, "to strengthen the staying power and morale of this country." To soldiers a faulty employment of force for the mere sake of proclaiming a spectacular victory appears a violation of the elementary canons of war; but that in a long conflict the psychology of the "Home Front" has to be studied, and may have to be taken into account, is a factor that they must undoubtedly recognise.\*

There were also very sound strategical reasons for striking a blow on the Palestine front at this time. The collapse of Russia had set free numerous Turkish forces, and it was known that these were being assembled round Aleppo, under German guidance and leadership, for the recapture of Baghdad. The threat thus offered to the Mesopotamian sector of the battle line could be more quickly and economically countered by an offensive in Palestine than by the direct reinforcement of General Maude's army, especially since the bulk of the reinforcements was to be drawn from the Salonika theatre, our commitments in which the General

\* Even Napoleon in 1815, when urged to wait for the collection of his forces, replied: "It is essential that I should win a brilliant victory without waiting" (see Ludwig's *Napoleon*, p. 521).



Staff at the War Office had long desired to reduce. Thus General Allenby's main strategical objective was the defeat of the Turkish army in Southern Palestine in order to draw down the Turkish reserves from Aleppo, and so to remove the danger of an expedition against Baghdad. He arrived in Egypt charged to report on the additions required to the E.E.F. in order to accomplish this task. The predisposition of the Prime Minister in favour of a success in the East made it likely that all reasonable requests made by General Allenby would be met.

Early in 1917 Turkey was in evil plight. During the latter half of 1916 her best remaining troops had been taken to fight Germany's battles against Russia and Rumania. Meanwhile her starved and ragged armies on the Caucasus front wasted away in the rigours of a bitter winter; her forces in Iraq suffered a decisive defeat; those on the Palestine front were falling back in face of the British advance; and the expedition to recover Mecca and to quench the Arab revolt had been dramatically checked by Feisal's flank move to Wejh. The month of March brought some relief in the Russian Revolution and in the check to the British advance at Gaza, but brought also the fall of Baghdad. Thus of the four sacred cities in charge of Turkey, as the religious head of Islam, two—Mecca and Baghdad—were already in the hands of her enemies, while Medina was besieged and Jerusalem threatened. Not only was she losing the war, but forfeiting her religious prestige. To lose a war was no new experience to Turkey; to lose the holy places of her religion was more disturbing.

The German High Command decided that some spectacular exhibition of might and efficiency was required to restore the shrinking faith of their ally. At the end of April General von Falkenhayn was commissioned to proceed to Turkey and to discuss with the Turkish Command an operation for the re-conquest of Baghdad\*. Von Falkenhayn was a redoubtable opponent. He had been the arbiter of German

\* Both to those that ruled Turkey at the time, with their dreams of Pan-Turanian extension, and to the Germans, with their railway plans and hopes, Baghdad was the most attractive objective.

strategy for a period of two years, from September, 1914, soon after the Battle of the Marne, when he had succeeded Von Moltke as Chief of the Great General Staff, up till the end of August, 1918, when he was replaced by Hindenburg and Ludendorff. The failure of the Verdun battle shook his position, and Rumania's entry into the war was the final cause of his supersession. He had then been employed as commander of the principal German army in the force that overran Rumania. By a series of beautifully timed operations in conjunction with Mackensen's Danube army (composed of Bulgarians, Turks, Austrians and Germans) he had played a notable part in this most brilliant campaign. Thus the leader chosen to resuscitate the fortunes of Turkey had proved himself both in the field and in the council chamber. His failure was to show how obstinately inflexible the German mentality often is when dealing with abnormal factors, and how little capable of understanding another nation's sensibilities and characteristics.

Von Falkenhayn reached Constantinople on May 7th, and at once set out on a tour of inspection to weigh the practicability of the proposed plan. He saw Khalil, the commander of the Sixth Army, in Iraq ; he saw Djemal Pasha in Syria ; and in June he reported that the move of a sufficient force against Baghdad was possible if it was carefully prepared, and provided that the Palestine front was secure.

Negotiations followed between Constantinople and Berlin in which it was decided to assemble a Turkish army at Aleppo, to support it with a special body of German troops (known as Pasha II. or the Asia Corps), and to carry out detailed reconnaissance for improvement of the lines of communication between Aleppo and Baghdad. By a decree of Enver, promulgated early in June, the projected offensive was, for secrecy's sake, to be known by the name "Yilderim"—that is to say, "lightning." In view of the rate at which preparations and moves were normally carried out in Turkey, the name was unduly optimistic ; nor did it secure secrecy, for the plan came to the knowledge of the Intelligence Services of the Entente at a very early stage.

The nucleus of the Yilderim force was to be the III. and

XV. Army Corps, which had been operating against Russia and Rumania. They were to constitute the Seventh Army, of which Mustapha Kemal \* received the command. He soon found himself unable to stomach a control so completely German, and was replaced by the more pliable Fevzi Pasha.

The principal units of the German force which was to take part in the campaign were :—

Three battalions of infantry (numbered 701, 702, 703) ;

Three troops of cavalry.†

Three machine-gun companies (six machine guns each);‡

Three trench mortar sections (four light trench mortars each) ; †

One battery of field howitzers ;

Two batteries of field guns ;

Three sections of mountain howitzers ; ‡

One anti-aircraft battery ;

Four squadrons of aeroplanes ;

with the necessary engineer, signal, and medical units and ammunition and supply columns. Its total strength was about 6,500. The commander was Colonel von Franckenburg und Proschlitz. The men were all specially picked men.

The Germans seem from the first not only to have disregarded Turkish sentiment, but to have neglected to take proper account of local conditions. According to Liman von Sanders, his mission, which had the advantage of three and a half years' experience of Turkey, was not even consulted in the formulation of the plan, nor was its personnel utilised. The headquarters staff of Yilderim consisted of sixty-five German officers and nine Turks ; these latter were junior officers, used mainly for liaison purposes. The German staff treated the problem as if it was subject to similar rules of time and space as a problem in the Western theatre—as if, in fact, the executants were Germans. They had to discover that in Turkey an order issued was a very long way from being an order carried out, and that the delays and obstructions in troop movements over the Turkish lines of communication were almost interminable.

† One worked normally with each battalion.

\* Now President of the Turkish Republic.

They spent the summer working in a medium which was strange and disconcerting to them, and accomplished little.

Even before the Second Battle of Gaza the staff of Eastern Force had been considering an advance by the right as an alternative to a direct assault on Gaza. But at that time the state of the communications did not permit any deviation from the straight path along the sea coast. It was left to Sir Philip Chetwode in May, when he succeeded Sir Charles Dobell, to develop this idea and to work out the plan which, with slight modifications, was adopted and executed by General Allenby.

The obvious line of advance into Palestine was by Gaza, keeping close to the sea. This route secured the full advantages of naval co-operation, directly covered the main line of communication, and presented comparatively small difficulties of water supply. But the defences of Gaza were now too solid to be broken except by a slow and costly process of siege. Even a success would be unlikely to provide any opportunity for the mounted troops, the arm in which lay the chief superiority of the British force over the Turkish. The Turkish centre was also strong; the ground between the Wadis Ghuzze and Imleih, inside the triangle marked by the points Tel el Jemmi—Bir Iftis—Gamli, was a flat, open plain dominated by the enemy works on the ridge above it to the north; difficulties of water supply would be considerable, and the mounted arm could not develop its full value. There remained the Turkish left, which rested about Kauwukah, some ten miles north-west of Beersheba. The defences here were weaker and less complete. The terrain also was more favourable to the attack; a force established north-west of Beersheba would be on higher ground than the Turkish works, and would thus have the advantage of observation. The open flank, too, would offer an opportunity for the mounted troops.

General Chetwode's plan was to develop during the summer such transport and administrative improvements as would enable a force to be thrust out on to the high ground between Beersheba and Hareira. He recognised that before the Turkish left could be attacked a preliminary

operation would be necessary for the capture of Beersheba, which the Turks held with a detached force, since there was not comfortable room for manœuvre between Beersheba and the Turkish left, and possession of the water at Beersheba would be essential to further operations.

General Allenby, after a close inspection of the front immediately after taking over the command, accepted General Chetwode's plan and his estimate of the troops required—seven divisions and three mounted divisions.\* On July 12th, a fortnight after his arrival, he telegraphed home an outline of his proposals and his requirements in additional troops. The principal items were as follows :—

(a) Two complete divisions.

(b) Field artillery to complete his existing divisions to the full scale of thirty-six 18-pdrs. and twelve 4.5-inch howitzers each.

(c) Corps artillery to provide a proportion of four 60-pdrs., eight medium howitzers (6-inch or 8-inch), and four anti-aircraft guns per division.

(d) Five squadrons of aeroplanes.

(e) Two Army Troops companies R.E.

(f) Additional signal and medical units.

These requirements were met, except that it was not found possible to provide quite the full complement of artillery. The number of divisions was made up by the despatch of the 10th Division from Salonika and by the formation, from British Territorial battalions and Indian units, of a new division, the 75th, in Egypt. Eastern Force was now abolished, and the troops were organised into three corps, viz. :—

The Desert Mounted Corps, under General Chauvel, consisting of the Anzac, Australian and Yeomanry Mounted Divisions.

The XX. Army Corps, under General Chetwode—10th, 53rd, 60th, 74th Divisions.

The XXI. Army Corps, under General Bulfin—52nd, 54th, 75th Divisions.

\* The estimate of the Turkish force at this time was six divisions and one cavalry division, 46,000 rifles, 2,800 sabres, 250 machine guns, 200 guns.

The troops directly under General Headquarters included the Imperial Camel Corps Brigade, the 7th Mounted Brigade, the Imperial Service Cavalry Brigade and the 20th Indian Infantry Brigade.\*

The XX. Corps and the Desert Mounted Corps (less one division) were to form the striking wing for the main blow against the Turkish left; the XXI. Corps was to make a secondary attack on Gaza; and one mounted division was to cover the twenty-mile gap in the centre between the two attacking wings. At first sight this wide separation of the two corps may appear dangerous. In reality the ground in the centre was so flat and open that an enemy counterstroke would have had little prospect of success. The real difficulties of the plan were three—transport, water, and secrecy.

There were no metalled roads available south of the Gaza—Beersheba line; indeed hardly any roads at all. This precluded the use of mechanical transport between railhead and the troops, who were therefore dependent for their supply on horsed transport and pack camels.† And the striking force would have to operate at a considerable distance from railhead; Shellal to Beersheba was over fifteen miles. The large number of animals required for supply purposes greatly increased the difficulties of the second main problem, that of water.

For all practical purposes the country between the Wadi Ghuzze and Beersheba and between Beersheba and the Turkish left was absolutely waterless, so that every drop required by the personnel had to be carried, while animals could not be watered between bases. When it is considered that the total daily requirements of the striking force amounted to 400,000 gallons, of which about one-quarter (equivalent to a weight approaching 500 tons), had to be carried, the formidable nature of the problem will be realised.

When the question of transport and supply had been closely examined, it was found that the ruling factors were these: by the employment of all the transport available,

\* See end of chapter for a complete order of battle.

† Actually it was found possible to use mechanical transport to a limited extent during the operations, between railhead at Karm and Beersheba. But this could not have been reckoned on in making the plan.

including the trains of two of the three divisions opposite Gaza, the striking force could be supplied with food and ammunition up to Beersheba and for one march beyond : but it could be supplied with water only up to Beersheba : its farther advance would be dependent on the water supplies at that place. The rapid capture of Beersheba therefore became the corner-stone of the whole plan.

The third main difficulty was to concentrate a striking force sufficient to overwhelm the garrison of Beersheba rapidly and then to attack the Turkish left, without the Turks becoming aware of the plan and taking steps to counter or avoid the blow. There could be no question of concealing entirely the preparations for a movement against Beersheba and the Turkish left ; but it was hoped to persuade the enemy that this movement was merely a feint and that the real attack would be once more against Gaza. There would have to be not only visible preparations opposite Gaza, but an actual attack on its defences.

In outline therefore the plan was as follows : to concentrate as secretly as possible a striking force of four divisions and two mounted divisions opposite the Turkish left and Beersheba ; to capture Beersheba rapidly and secure the water supplies at that place ; thereafter to assault with all possible speed the Turkish left flank defences and to roll up the enemy line towards Gaza, holding the cavalry in readiness to push round towards the water supplies on the Wadi Hesi and to intercept or harass the Turkish retreat from Gaza ; during these operations to fix the enemy's attention on Gaza by every available means, including a heavy bombardment and a determined holding attack.

One of General Allenby's earliest decisions was the move of his headquarters from Cairo to a camp at Um el Kelab, near Rafa. This move and the constant presence of General Allenby at the front had a great effect on the spirits of the army. His inspiring personality and the arrival of fresh troops and material, proving the earnestness with which the new effort was intended, quickly removed the blight that had been cast on the army by the previous failures. Faith in the happy issue of the forthcoming operations was

the more necessary, since the physical conditions of the summer were trying. The temperature constantly rose to 110°, and there was no shade ; at intervals a scorching wind from the desert—called “ Khamisin ”—blew for several days on end and made life almost unendurable. The slightest cut or scratch turned septic in this climate, and the great majority of men at one time or another suffered from this cause. There was also the “ sand-fly fever,” which left those attacked limp and exhausted for many days. And little respite from the conditions at the front could be found in periods of leave. The United Kingdom was too far and shipping too precious ; many men in the force had not been home for two years or more. Even leave to Cairo was strictly limited owing to the strain on the capacity of the railway.

There was much to be done. Many new units had to be raised and equipped ; those arriving from overseas had to be absorbed into the organisation of the force and seasoned ; depots of stores and munitions of all kinds had to be accumulated ; the lines of communication had in great part to be re-fashioned to deal with the increase of the force ; and up in front every detail of the plan had to be worked out and elaborated and the troops trained to play their part in it. Space will not permit more than the barest outline of the activity during this summer in every branch and department of the army.

Kantara, on the Suez Canal, became a port, with quays where ocean steamers could be berthed and unloaded. Here grew out of the desert a great base with miles of metalled roads, large camps, buildings, workshops, and huge piles of supplies and stores of every kind. The doubling of the railway up to Deir el Belah progressed rapidly ; the branch to Shellal threw out an offshoot to Gamli. Preparations were made for the rapid extension of the railways to follow up the advance ; special construction gangs were trained. Pipelines were developed and extended ; new wells sunk and storage for water constructed. Shellal, with its abundant springs, became the principal water base. Here a dam was made providing a reserve of 500,000 gallons of water ; and plant was contrived by which 2,000 fanatis could be filled and



loaded on camels every hour. Signal communications were improved. Maps of the country were drawn and engraved.

While the mechanism by which the army lived, moved and had its being was thus being overhauled and improved, the units of the army were being systematically trained for their task. One of the three cavalry divisions held the sector between Shellal and Gamli, and patrolled the wide stretch between the lines on this open flank. A second division was in support at Abasan el Kebir, ready to move out at half an hour's notice—a readiness which was frequently tested by day and by night.\* The third division occupied a training camp on the seashore near Khan Yunus. The divisions changed places every month. Thus, while two divisions were in training, the third was being hardened by practical experience and rough work in the front line. By the end of the autumn men and horses were fit and ready.†

Of the infantry only five divisions were available during the summer, the four which had been engaged at the second battle of Gaza (52nd, 53rd, 54th, 74th) and the 60th, which reached the front in July. The 10th Division did not arrive till September, and the 75th was not complete till October. There were normally two divisions and a portion of a third in the line, while the remainder trained in camps near the sea. Throughout the summer continual raids and enterprises were undertaken by the troops in the line against the enemy trenches opposite Gaza. The training behind the line was directed towards preparation for open warfare and great mobility. Special attention was paid to fitting the men for long marches over heavy ground. They were also trained to work on a limited water ration—half a gallon per man per day.

\* The "record" was held by a Horse Artillery battery, which turned out in full marching order, complete with ammunition, rations and stores, in eleven minutes after receipt of the order.—("Preston's Desert Mounted Corps.")

† For the forthcoming operations each man was provided with a pair of officer's-pattern saddle wallets, in which he carried three days' rations for himself. Two nose-bags on each saddle carried 19 lbs. of grain (two days' mobile ration). A third day's grain was carried in limbered G.S. wagons (three to each regiment). Blankets and greatcoats were not carried. (See "Preston's Desert Mounted Corps," pp. 12-13, and the official "Veterinary History of the War.")

Meanwhile the details of the plan were being gradually matured. The real crux of the problem lay in the possibility of deceiving the enemy as to the point of attack. Concealment of the very extensive administrative preparations necessary to enable a large force to operate near Beersheba, at fifteen to twenty miles distance from railhead, was not easy. The enemy up till late in the summer still retained superiority in the air; and the open flank made it easy for enemy spies to reach the rear of our lines and observe the distribution of our troops and depots. Most of the spies were natives or in native dress, but there was at least one daring German who penetrated to the camps disguised as a British or Australian officer.

The steps taken to mislead the enemy are of some interest. It was impossible to conceal the preparations against Beersheba, but it was possible to conceal their size and extent. Thus the great bulk of the troops was kept opposite Gaza till the last possible moment and then moved across rapidly and secretly; the prolongation of the railway and pipe-line across the Wadi Ghuzze into No Man's Land was postponed to a late stage of the programme; and the accumulation of stores was contracted into as little time and space as possible. The Intelligence Branch displayed great ingenuity in conveying to the enemy the impression that the activity towards Beersheba and his left flank was a bluff to distract his reserves from Gaza; it was, for instance, skilfully contrived that the Turks should find a staff officer's "lost" note-book with most revealing disclosures of the inability of the British commander to overcome the difficulties of water and transport for a large force in the region round Beersheba.\* About once a fortnight throughout the summer a reconnaissance was pushed close up to the defences of Beersheba by the cavalry division in the line. These reconnaissances served a double purpose. Their constant repetition suggested to the enemy that our efforts in this direction would be confined to demonstrations; it was hoped that the real attack on Beersheba would gain the advantage of surprise by being mis-

\* An account of this ruse will be found in "The Secret Corps," by Captain Tuohy, also in Chap. XVI. of "Secret Service," by Major-General Sir G. Aston.

taken at first for another reconnaissance, an impression which our Intelligence Service adroitly insinuated at the right moment by certain cipher wireless messages which were meant to be read by the Turk. Secondly, these periodical advances towards Beersheba provided a screen under cover of which commanders and staff became acquainted with the somewhat intricate ground towards Beersheba and worked out their arrangements for the approach to and assault on the Turkish works.

Our command of the sea, which made the Turk naturally nervous of his right flank, was also used to aid in the deception of the enemy. The Intelligence Service spread rumours calculated to arouse apprehension of a landing in rear of Gaza; naval vessels were allowed to be seen taking soundings off the coast; and a fleet of small craft was collected opposite Belah as if for the transport of a landing force. Lastly, the timing of the various phases of the operation was specially designed to mislead the enemy. Zero day was the day on which Beersheba was to be assaulted. But the operations were to begin a week before Zero day with a systematic bombardment of the Gaza defences which would gradually increase in violence and be supplemented by naval gunfire. With the enemy's attention thus directed on Gaza, the striking force would be hurried secretly over to the other flank. In the interval after the capture of Beersheba, while the attack on the Turkish left flank was being staged, an assault on a portion of the Gaza defences was to be made by the XXI. Corps. It was hoped that this sequence of events would tend to confirm the enemy in the impression that Gaza was his real point of danger, or at least to confuse his mind as to the side on which lay the main weight of our offensive.

All these devices to mislead the enemy would have been of much less avail had not the new squadrons and more modern machines received from home enabled our Air Force in the late autumn to wrest from the enemy the command of the air which he had enjoyed for so long in this theatre. After a few trials of strength had convinced the German aviators of the superior speed and performance of the Bristol

Fighters, they came over only at a very respectful height, and by the beginning of the operations had been almost driven out of the skies.

It was originally intended that the attack should be made in September, in order to secure as much as possible of the favourable campaigning season, between the summer heat and the winter rains. But it soon became obvious that owing to the late arrival of certain component parts of the force, neither the training of the troops nor the administrative arrangements would be complete till late in October. Rather than attack with immature plans and unhandy troops, General Allenby decided to accept postponement of the operations, although this involved certain risks. The November rains might delay the advance by turning the maritime plain of Palestine into a sea of mud, or the Turk, who had by now realised the danger threatening him, might forestall our attack by some counter-move.

Early in October the War Cabinet imparted to Allenby their hopes of eliminating Turkey from the war altogether, and suggested the possibility of sending from France in November additional divisions sufficient to make the capture of Jerusalem a certainty. Mr. Lloyd George's fertile brain constantly nursed the idea of abstracting a part of the reserves from the Western front during the winter months when serious operations were impossible, winning a victory with them in a warmer climate, and returning them to France before the campaigning season opened in the spring. General Allenby's reply made clear the administrative difficulties of such a scheme, and the proposal was eventually dropped.\*

While the British plan was being prepared and polished, the counsels of the enemy were divided and troubled. The concentration of the Seventh Army at Aleppo was very slow, the arrival of the German units even slower. The "Asia Corps" reached Haidar Pasha at the beginning of September; it was still anchored there in November. By

\* The project for a landing at Ayas Bay (near Alexandretta) had also been revived about this time, but rejected as impracticable. (See "Soldiers and Statesmen," Vol. II., p. 175.)

the end of the summer the vaunted Yilderim army at Aleppo seems to have comprised four headquarters (those of Yilderim, Seventh Army, III. and XV. Army Corps), but only three divisions immediately available. Meanwhile serious doubts had arisen as to the practicability of the project to retake Baghdad. Further reconnaissance had shown unexpected difficulties; experience of Turkish methods of organising war had shocked and exasperated von Falkenhayn and his staff; and now came the gloomiest reports of conditions on the Palestine front, causing grave doubts as to its ability to withstand the shock of the British offensive without reinforcement. It was obviously of no use to persist in the Baghdad adventure unless the Palestine front were secure; its collapse would expose Aleppo and the communications to Mesopotamia. In the discussions which followed on the course to be pursued, each of the three leading personalities—Enver, Djemal, von Falkenhayn—advocated a different solution of the problem. Enver was extremely reluctant to abandon, even temporarily, the Baghdad enterprise, and stood out for its prosecution at all costs. Djemal demanded reinforcements sufficient to enable him to hold his front, but wished no interference in his sphere of command by the German headquarters of Yilderim. Von Falkenhayn saw rightly the futility of half-measures; he recognised that the security of the Palestine front, which he visited on September 9th and 10th, must be the foremost consideration, and he proposed the transfer of the whole of the Yilderim army to Palestine and an offensive to forestall the British attack. He still failed to grasp the limitations of the Turkish lines of communication and the impossibility of any rapid transfer of force from one point to another, such as he had been accustomed to in Europe.\*

Eventually von Falkenhayn's view prevailed. But now came a delicate task for Enver, to hand over the Palestine operations to Yilderim without mortally offending Djemal, whose political influence was great. A compromise was adopted, by which all the troops south of Jerusalem and

\* Consider for instance the moves of the IX. Germany Army on the Russian front in October and November, 1914.

west of the Dead Sea came under Yilderim, while Djemal retained command of Syria and the Hejaz. The arrangement was hardly a rational one, since it left the lines of communication of the Yilderim force under the control of Djemal, furious at his supersession and hardly likely to further von Falkenhayn's plans with enthusiasm.

It was mid-September before this arrangement was concluded and the transport of the Seventh Army from Aleppo to the Palestine front begun.\* The troops already on the Palestine front became the Eighth Army under Kress von Kressenstein. The intention was for the Seventh Army to concentrate about Beersheba for a blow at the British right flank. It was, however, far too late; before the army could even reach the front, General Allenby's blow fell.

Thus before a shot was fired, the danger to Baghdad had vanished. And the opening of the British offensive caught the enemy commander-in-chief with his plans incomplete, his organisation in process of change, and himself and his staff on the railway between Aleppo and Jerusalem.† British strategy had scored a distinct success.

The final stages of the British dispositions for the attack on Beersheba occupied the last week of October. Zero day had been fixed for October 31st. The Desert Mounted Corps and XX. Corps had to be concentrated on the right flank; railway, pipe-line, and signal communications had to be extended as far as possible towards Beersheba; and wells had to be opened and developed at the points selected for the final deployment of the force before it moved to the attack. These were the steps which had been left to the latest possible moment, to avoid detection by the enemy of the real weight of the blow threatening his left. Zero day had been fixed so that troops might have the assistance of the moon for night marching and work during this last stage. Movement by day was reduced to a minimum, and a fighting patrol was maintained in the air to keep inquisitive German aviators at a distance.

\* Meanwhile agents of the British Intelligence Service had, on September 6th, blown up the great depot of munitions collected at Haidar Pasha for the Yilderim scheme.

† Von Falkenhayn actually left Aleppo on November 4th.

The deployment of the Desert Mounted Corps and XX. Corps for the advance to Beersheba was carried out by a gradual process of side-stepping to the south-east. Thus the 60th Division, already in the line at Gamli, moved down to Bir el Esani, Maalaga, Abu Ghalyun. The 74th Division from the area behind Gaza took its place at Gamli and on October 29th moved out to Khasif, the 10th Division moving up to Shellal and Gamli. The fourth division of the Corps, the 53rd, had meanwhile also moved across from behind Gaza, and had taken up an outpost line on October 25th about Goz el Geleib to cover railway construction. The normal-gauge line was being laid forward from Shellal by Imara towards Karm, while a light line from Gamli was being built towards the same place. A brigade of cavalry covered the outpost line of the 53rd, on a position along a low ridge above the Wadi Hanafish, from El Buggar—Points 720—Point 630—Point 550.\* This ridge had been seized and entrenched by the 3rd A.L.H. Brigade on October 25th. Two days later, on October 27th, when the London Yeomanry of the 8th Mounted Brigade (temporarily under orders of 53rd Division) held this line, the enemy suddenly attacked it in great force. The Yeomanry put up a gallant and desperate resistance. The post on Point 720 was overwhelmed by a mounted charge after beating back two dismounted assaults; only three of the garrison survived. The post on Point 630 held out till relieved by the advance of the 3rd A.L.H. Brigade and the 53rd Division, when the Turks withdrew. The 53rd Division now took over the El Buggar—Wadi Hanafish line from the mounted troops.

The Desert Mounted Corps (less Yeomanry division) completed their deployment during the nights of October 27th/28th and 28th/29th. On the first of these the Anzac Mounted Division rode from Abasan el Kebir to Khalasa; on the second it moved on to Asluj, while the Australian Mounted Division moved to Khalasa. For some days previously the engineers of the corps, covered by a brigade

\* Subsequent survey has shown that none of these heights were accurate so that on a modern map these points will not appear.

of the Anzacs, had been busy digging out the wells at these two places—sites of ancient, long-buried cities.

All the vacated camps behind Gaza had been left standing, and were lighted up at night. By day all troops were carefully hidden. To the enemy airmen, forced by the superior speed of the British 'planes and the anti-aircraft artillery to observe at a great height, no change in the dispositions of the army was apparent. It is known from an order subsequently captured that on so late a date as October 29th the enemy believed that six divisions were still opposite Gaza, and that a movement by one division and one mounted division only need be apprehended against Beersheba.\*

The location and approximate fighting strength of the British forces on the night of October 30th, 1917, were as follows :—

Striking Wing.	Location.	Rifles.	Sabres.	Guns.
<i>Desert Mounted Corps.</i>				
Anzac Mounted Division (Major-General Chaytor).	Asluj	—	5,000	12
Australian Mounted Division (Major-General Hodgson).	Khalasa	—	5,000	12
7th Mounted Brigade (attached).	Esani	—	1,000	4
<i>XX. Corps.</i>				
10th Division (Major-General Longley).	Shellal	9,500†	—	48
53rd Division (Major-General Mott).	Goz el Geleib	12,000	—	48
60th Division (Major-General Shea).	Esani	12,000	—	48
74th Division (Major-General Girdwood).	Khasif	12,000	—	48
Imperial Camel Corps Brigade (attached).	Shellal	2,000	—	6
Corps artillery . . . .	—	—	—	16
Total Striking Wing .	—	47,500	11,000	242

\* The 10th Division had been badly infected with malaria at Salonika, and had still some 3,000 men in hospital.

† According to the Official History, however, the Turks claim to have been well-informed of our movements.



Covering Force in Centre.	Location.	Rifles.	Sabres.	Guns.
Yeomanry Mounted Division (Major-General Barrow).	Abasan el Kebir	—	5,000	12

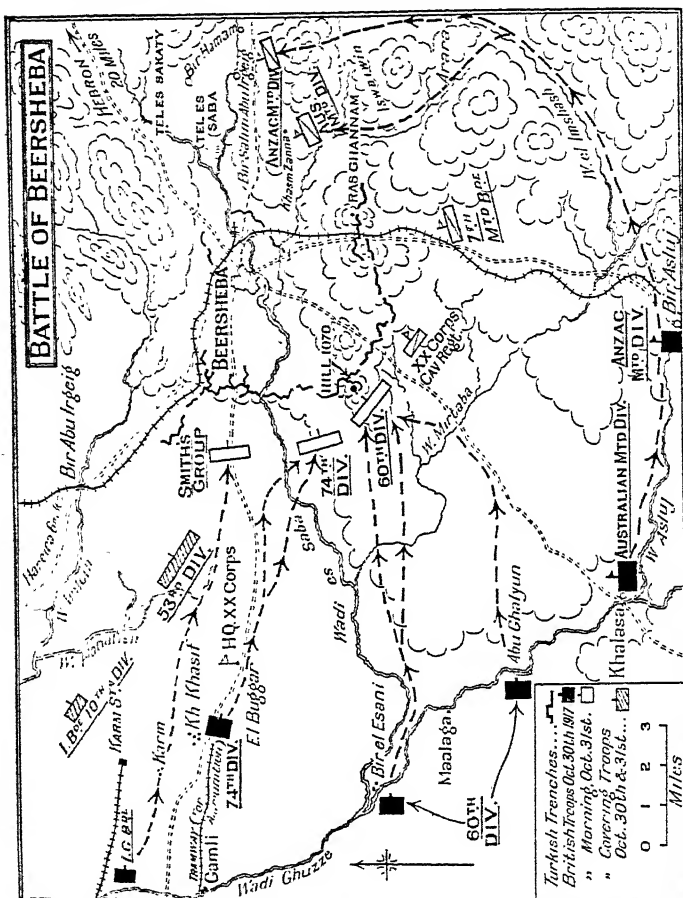
Left Wing, opposite Gaza.	Location.	Rifles.	Sabres.	Guns.
<i>XXI. Corps.</i>				
52nd Division (Major-General Hill).	Opposite Gaza	11,000	—	48
54th Division (Major-General Hare).	Opposite Gaza	11,500	—	48
75th Division (Major-General Palin).	Sh. Abbas	9,500	—	48
Composite force (25th Indian Infantry Brigade, Imperial Service Brigade).	El Mendur	3,000	1,000	8
Corps artillery . . .	—	—	—	66
Total XXI. Corps . .	—	35,000	1,000	218

A grand total of, say, 75,000 rifles, 17,000 sabres, 475 guns.

The Turks on the Palestine front had passed the summer and autumn in depressing conditions. The communications could not provide the supplies required, and the army was short of food and equipment. According to Kress von Kressenstein, many of the guns could not be moved for lack of horses. Disease and desertion were rife, and the increasing British shell-fire was beginning to cause heavy losses. While their enemies grew in numbers, the Turks received only a small increase of strength. The 24th and 26th Divisions arrived in August and September. Other reinforcements were moving down when the battle opened. The reorganisation which divided the force into the Seventh and Eighth Armies and placed it under von Falkenhayn only took effect very shortly before the British attack; the headquarters of the Seventh Army did not reach Hebron till October 27th,

and von Falkenhayn himself only reached Jerusalem from Aleppo on November 5th.

At the moment of the attack on Beersheba the Turkish



MAP IX.

forces actually on the front consisted of nine divisions and one cavalry division, disposed as follows:—

*Eighth Army* (Kress von Kressenstein)—

XXII. Corps. Gaza. 3rd, 53rd Divisions.

XX. Corps. Sheria. 16th, 26th, 54th Divisions.

Army Reserve—7th Division, 19th Division.

*Seventh Army* (Fevzi Pasha)—

III. Corps. Kauwukah. 24th Division.

Beersheba. 27th Division, 3rd Cavalry Division.

The 20th Division of the XV. Corps was on the way down from Aleppo. It reached Ramleh on November 6th. Divisions probably averaged 4,500 to 5,000 rifles. The total strength of the force in front line at the end of October was estimated at 40,000 to 45,000 rifles, 1,500 sabres, 300 guns.\* This seems to have been approximately correct.

## 2. *The Battle of Beersheba, October 31st, 1917*

The small township of Beersheba (Bir es Saba) lies at the foot of the Judæan Range on the Wadi es Saba, which drains the southern slopes of the range and runs westwards to join the Wadi Ghuzze about Esani. There are steep rocky hills to the north, to the east, and to the south of the town, which lies in a wide hollow. Only to the west, from which side the railway entered the town, is the ground comparatively flat and open. Before the war Beersheba had little commercial or other consequence. Its excellent water supply made it a trade centre, but of an exceptionally barren district. When at the end of 1914 it was chosen as the base for the Turkish attempts against the Suez Canal, the Germans made some effort to improve the appearance of the place. A few modern buildings were erected to impress the local population with a sense of Germany's riches and power. Apart from these, Beersheba remained little more than a large, rather squalid, Arab village.

The Turks had prepared defences all round Beersheba. On the south-west and south these consisted of a series of well-dug and well-wired redoubts, on a line of heights three to four miles from the town. The works were well sited, with good observation and command, and were strongly constructed, with dug-outs, overhead cover, and some wire. The defect of the defensive system was a lack of depth; it was in most places a single line only. East and north of the town trenches had been dug, less strong and without wire, since attack from these directions was naturally not very

\* Kress von Kressenstein gives the strength of the forces under his command—presumably therefore of the Eighth Army only—as 24,000 rifles, 600 sabres, 390 machine guns, 231 guns, with a ration strength of 72,000 men. He admits that the figures of men are only approximate, being based on Turkish returns, but considers the numbers of guns and machine guns as correct.

greatly apprehended, and wire was always a scarce "article of store" with the Turk.

Von Falkenhayn's plan—still nominally in process of execution—had provided that the Seventh Army should assemble at Beersheba for his intended offensive against the British right. But on the day of the battle the Seventh Army was still incomplete and scattered, and the garrison in and about Beersheba, under the III. Corps headquarters (commander, Ismet Bey), comprised only the 27th Division—an Arab formation—some units of the 16th and 24th Divisions, and the 3rd Cavalry Division; in all some 3,500 to 4,000 rifles, 1,000 sabres, four batteries, and about fifty machine guns.

The British force deployed against Beersheba—two mounted divisions and three divisions of infantry—seemed disproportionately large. But the quintessence of the Beersheba operation lay in a speedy decision, and the whole plan was devised with the object of a quick and crushing success, so that the Turk might have no time to destroy the wells, the chief prize that Beersheba had to offer to its captor. The plan of attack was as follows. Two divisions, the 60th and 74th, were to assault the works south-west of the town, between the Khalasa—Beersheba road and the Wadi Saba. The Camel Brigade, with two battalions of the 53rd Division, was to mask the defences north of the Wadi Saba. The remainder of the 53rd Division was to cover the northern flank of the attack against interference from the Turkish forces which lay about Hareira.

The infantry assault was intended to fix the main garrison of Beersheba, and thus to leave to the Desert Mounted Corps, it was hoped, the opportunity of a swift steep on the town and wells from their least protected side. The two mounted divisions, starting from Khalasa and Asluj, were to make a night ride of some thirty miles, and were to appear in the early morning to the east of Beersheba. After blocking the road from Hebron, which entered Beersheba from the north-east, they were to break into the town as rapidly as possible, seize the wells, and cut the retreat of the enemy forces engaged west of the town with our infantry. The 7th

Mounted Brigade was to operate against the southern defences as a link between the infantry and mounted troops.

An independent raiding party of some Hejaz Arabs, with a stiffening of British machine gunners and Lewis gunners, was sent out beyond the cavalry. The whole party—under Lieut.-Colonel S. F. Newcombe, R.E.—was mounted on camels, and made a wide detour east of the mounted troops. Its mission was to strike the Hebron road well to the north and to harass any reinforcements marching from Hebron down to Beersheba, or any part of the Beersheba garrison which might escape north towards Hebron. The activities of this small detachment led to some important consequences.

During the night of October 30th/31st some 40,000 troops of all arms were on the move to take up their allotted positions for the attack on Beersheba. The date of operations had been so timed that the light of a full moon favoured this night approach. The weather, however, was sultry and airless, and a dense pall of dust lay heavy on the marching columns. The assaulting infantry were to be in their positions, some 2,000 to 2,500 yards from the enemy works, by 4 a.m. They had about eight miles to march over difficult ground. Thanks to excellent staff arrangements and to the detailed preliminary reconnaissances which had been made by all commanders, the infantry, guns and other components of the XX. Corps were marshalled for battle without a hitch of any kind. By 3 a.m. all troops of the Corps had reached their stations.

The front of attack of the 60th and 74th Divisions was a little over five thousand yards, about equally divided between the two divisions. Each put two brigades into front line. Opposite the 60th Division lay a strong outwork, on a commanding height known as Hill 1070,\* about half a mile in advance of the enemy's main line. Besides directly barring the approach to the main line on the 60th Division front, it also prevented the batteries of the 74th Division from approaching within sufficiently close range to cut the wire.

\* Marked 1069 on modern maps, some meticulous fellow having since measured it.

The assault of Hill 1070 by the 181st Brigade of the 60th Division, therefore, constituted the first phase of the attack. At 5.55 a.m. the hill was subjected to a heavy bombardment. But not a breath of wind disturbed the air, and soon the top of the hill was enveloped in such dense clouds of dust that it was impossible for the artillery to observe the effect of their fire. It was found necessary to interrupt the bombardment for three-quarters of an hour to allow the dust to settle. It was resumed at 7.45 a.m., and at 8.30 the 181st Brigade assaulted and captured Hill 1070 with little loss.

During this first phase the attacking battalions on other parts of the front had been working forward towards the Turkish main line. As soon as Hill 1070 was taken, batteries moved up, under heavy artillery fire, and came into action at wire-cutting range. From about 10.30 a.m. to noon the guns battered the Turkish defences, and the infantry crept gradually on to within assaulting distance. It had been arranged that the time for the assault should be given by the G.O.C. 60th Division as soon as he judged the wire on his front sufficiently cut. The hour was eventually fixed at 12.15 p.m., the G.O.C. 74th Division assenting to this, although uncertain whether the wire-cutting on his front had been effective. Actually the wire was found almost intact, and had to be cut by hand. Few of the enemy, however, stood to meet the assaulting waves of British infantry. By 1.30 p.m. the whole position between the Khalasa road and the Wadi Saba had been carried and consolidated, and an outpost line was being established about two thousand yards farther east.

Attention was now turned to the works north of the wadi, which had been watched by the Camel Brigade, to which two battalions of the 53rd Division were attached. The XX. Corps plan had laid down that, should the enemy still hold this line after his positions south of the Wadi had been taken, an attack should be made by the reserve brigade of the 74th Division in a northerly direction, coupled with a frontal attack by a brigade of the 53rd Division. Some delay took place in ascertaining whether the works were

held or not. Eventually, at about 7 p.m., the reserve brigade of the 74th Division occupied them after only the slightest resistance from a handful of snipers.

The work of the infantry was thus complete. It had never been intended that they should follow up the Turks into Beersheba, the capture of which was the cavalry's part. The only troops of the XX. Corps which went into Beersheba on the night of the 31st were some R.E., for water development.

The losses of the XX. Corps were under 1,200, a surprisingly low total for an attack against three miles of strongly-entrenched positions. The artillery support was by no means overwhelming, and averaged only a gun to every 50 yards. The captures included about 500 Turks and six field guns.

The advanced guard of the Anzac Mounted Division left Asluj at 6 p.m. on the 30th, and led north-east by a rough stony track which ran up the bed of the Wadi el Imshash. The Australian Mounted Division from Khalasa passed through Asluj and followed the Anzacs. After riding some fifteen miles the column divided. The leading brigade of the Anzacs, the 2nd A.L.H., which was to form the right of the attack, went on to Bir Arara, whence it was to move by Bir el Hamam on Bir es Sakaty, on the Hebron road. The remainder of the Anzacs and the Australian Division turned left-handed and rode almost due north by Iswaiwin to Khashim Zanna, about six miles east of Beersheba. Here the hills end and dip sharply to the open plain and to the wide and shallow Wadi Saba, running up to the town, which was clearly visible. The night ride had been uneventful and unopposed save for an enemy patrol, brushed aside by the leading troops of the main column south of Iswaiwin. But in that wild unreconnoitred country it was no mean feat to have guided columns by night for between twenty-five and thirty miles without misadventure or delay.

By 8 a.m. on October 31st the Anzac Mounted Division, with the 2nd A.L.H. Brigade on the right and the N.Z. Brigade on the left, had reached the line Bir Hamam—Bir Salim Abu Irgeig. The further objectives of these two

brigades were Tel es Sakaty and Tel es Saba respectively. The third brigade of the division, the 1st A.L.H., followed the New Zealanders. The Australian Mounted Division moved up to behind Khashim Zanna, in Corps reserve. Meanwhile the 7th Mounted Brigade had moved across country from Esani, had dismounted and deployed against Ras Ghannam, south of Beersheba. From General Chauvel's headquarters, on a prominent hill near Khashim Zanna, the sound of the infantry battle could be heard to the west, and shells could be seen bursting over the line of heights on which lay the Turkish defences; below, in the plain about Beersheba, the movements of the Turkish garrison and of our own horsemen could be distinctly followed.

About 9 a.m. the Anzac Division advanced to carry out the second stage of the Desert Mounted Corps programme—the reduction of the defences east and north-east of Beersheba. These defences centred on a strong keep at Tel es Saba. The *tel* (mound) lies on the northern bank of the wadi, about three miles east of the town. It is approximately 400 yards by 200 in extent, with a rocky but fairly flat top. On the wadi side its face is a cliff; on the other sides its slopes were abrupt but not sheer. It had been trenched for infantry and machine guns and had in places two tiers of fire which swept the wadi bed and the bare plain. It was a formidable work for horsemen to assault. The open ground prevented a near approach mounted, and the fire power of a brigade of cavalry on its feet is equivalent only to that of an infantry battalion. Moreover, the light shells of the horse artillery batteries could have little destructive effect on the deeply-protected machine guns on the *tel*. These same horsemen had already solved similar problems at Rafa and Magdhaba; but the solution required time, as those actions showed. And time was pressing.

The right-hand brigade, the 2nd A.L.H. from Bir el Hamam, aimed at Tel es Sakaty and the Hebron Road at the best pace possible. So soon as the horsemen rode into the plain they came under shrapnel fire from Turkish guns north of the road; and presently machine guns and riflemen added their fire. The leading troops swept on at the gallop



and were saved by their pace from heavy casualties. Short of the road they were forced to dismount, to put the horses under cover, and to advance on foot. Now progress was slow, and it was about 1 p.m. before the brigade, after a stiff fight, had made good Tel es Sakaty, the wells near by and the line of the Hebron road. Here it remained for the rest of the day, protecting the right flank of the Corps.

Meanwhile Tel es Saba was proving a very troublesome obstacle to the New Zealanders. They had moved forward soon after 9 a.m. on the north of the Wadi Saba with the intention of enveloping the *tel* from the east and north. The Canterbury Regiment was on the right and the Auckland Regiment on the left, and they were covered by the fire of the Somerset Battery at a range of 3,000 yards. The advance was made mounted to within about half a mile of the hill. But in face of the concentrated machine gun fire the last half mile to the hill had to be struggled for on foot and yard by yard. At 11 a.m. General Chaytor put in the 3rd L.H. Regiment of his reserve brigade and the Inverness Battery, and a little later the 2nd L.H. Regiment. Both these regiments galloped along the south bank of the wadi across the open plain to within 1,500 yards of their objective before dismounting. They then advanced on foot against the south face of the *tel*. The Somerset and Inverness Batteries, handled with great skill and gallantry, came into action at ranges of only 1,500 and 2,500 yards from the *tel* in the effort to master the Turkish machine guns. In an intense fire fight the two brigades gradually closed in on the hill, the Australians from the south, the New Zealanders from the east. The pressure exerted by the Australians drew off some of the opposition to the New Zealanders, and at 2.40 p.m. the latter brigade, with the Auckland Regiment in the lead, carried the Turkish line by a fierce rush. At 3 p.m. Tel es Saba was at last in our hands. A little before it fell, General Chauvel, disturbed at the delay to his plans caused by its protracted resistance, sent in the 3rd L.H. Brigade and two batteries of the Australian Division on the right of the New Zealand Brigade. But before their help became effective, the hill was won.

The 3rd A.L.H. Brigade and the 1st A.L.H. Brigade on its left were now, at 3.30 p.m., directed on objectives immediately north of Beersheba so as to isolate the town and complete its capture. Meanwhile, however, it became obvious to General Chauvel that in order to carry out his orders to seize Beersheba and its wells before dark—orders which had been emphatically repeated by General Allenby in the course of the afternoon—methodical progress must be abandoned as too slow and that risks must be taken. There were still two brigades of the Australian Mounted Division in reserve. One of these, the 4th Light Horse Brigade, under Brigadier-General Grant, was now ordered to make a mounted attack straight towards the town.

The direct path to Beersheba from the foothills near Khashim Zanna, where the brigade stood in reserve, lay down a long but slight slope, across some four miles of open ground—good galloping country. From aeroplane photographs it was known that the Turks had dug trenches across the plain to cover the entrance to the town on this side. The photographs showed these trenches to be unwired, but they were well concealed from ground observation and it had not been possible to locate them accurately or to ascertain their strength. About one hour's daylight remained. Grant's brigade was somewhat scattered, one regiment being on outpost duty. Moreover, the horses had been off-saddled. It was thus 4.30 p.m. before the brigade moved off at a trot. Soon it deployed on a front of two regiments, the 4th A.L.H. Regiment on the right, the 12th A.L.H. Regiment on the left. Each regiment moved in three successive lines each of a squadron, with 300 yards distance between squadrons. In each line the men were extended at about four to five paces interval. They had no swords, but held drawn bayonets in their hands. The third regiment, the 11th A.L.H., formed the reserve. The bulk of the machine-gun squadron followed on the left rear of the left leading regiment, since Turkish trenches were known to exist on the left flank. Two batteries, "A" Battery H.A.C. and the Notts Battery, supported the attack at a range of about 2,500 yards, and gave very valuable

help in dealing with some Turkish machine guns on the left flank.

The remaining brigade of the Australian Division, the 5th Mounted Brigade, was ordered to follow the 4th A.L.H. Brigade in support. The 7th Mounted Brigade south of the town had also been ordered to advance mounted. Further to the east the 1st and 3rd A.L.H. Brigades were, it will be remembered, moving in pursuance of previous orders on a line to the north of Beersheba. The 4th A.L.H. Brigade was thus the spear-head of a force of practically two complete mounted divisions closing in on to the doomed town. Its thrust was swift and deadly.

So soon as the lines of horsemen became visible in the plain, the Turkish gunners opened on them. But the loose formation and rapid movement of the Australians carried them on with but slight casualties. Presently some machine guns from the left began to cause damage, till our guns, spotting their flashes in the fading light, silenced them. Next came a rapid and sustained musketry from the infantry in the trenches in front. At first this brought down a number of horses and men in the leading lines. But as, in spite of these losses, the lines rode on at full gallop, the fire became erratic and in the last few hundred yards was almost harmless. It was found afterwards that the Turks, bewildered at the pace of the charge, had never altered the sights of their rifles, most of which were set for 800 yards. The artillery fire too failed to shorten quickly enough and mostly passed overhead.

The leading horsemen galloped over two lines of trenches. The majority then dismounted and cleaned up with the bayonet the trenches over which they had passed. But some galloped straight on into Beersheba, overrunning guns, transport, and columns of retreating Turks. To these the charge brought a sudden and dramatic change of fortune. They had relied on the cover of approaching darkness and on the resistance of the defences still intact east and north of the town to make good a comparatively orderly withdrawal, after completing the destruction of the wells. Now, as darkness closed in, they broke into wild disorder before

the galloping Australians, and were for the most part rounded up as prisoners. About 1,500 Turks and nine guns fell to the Desert Mounted Corps this day, and the greater number were taken in and just after the charge. The Turkish corps commander, Ismet Bey, escaped only by a few minutes.

The casualties of Grant's brigade in the charge were remarkably light, thirty-two killed and thirty-two wounded; the majority of these fell in the hand-to-hand fighting at the trenches after they had dismounted.

The Turks were completely surprised at Beersheba—not at the fact of an attack taking place, but at the unexpected weight and direction of that attack. The bombardment at Gaza, which had been steadily growing in intensity since October 27th, and the appearance of Allied warships had convinced them that the main attack would be, as heretofore, against their right, and that they need only expect a feint of one division and one mounted division against Beersheba. General Allenby's plans to mislead his enemy had in fact been entirely successful. The effects of the surprise were, firstly, that the Turks about Hareira made no effort to interfere with the course of the fight at Beersheba and left our flank-guard unmolested, and secondly, that the Beersheba garrison lost heart on realising the entirely unsuspected strength of the force deployed against them, and failed to make proper use of their strong position. Certainly the majority of the enemy infantry did not put up as stout a fight as usual. The 27th Division which constituted the main part of the garrison was an Arab formation, and Arab troops were never such doughty opponents as the Anatolian Turks. The Turkish artillery, however, shot well.

Even allowing for the comparative weakness of the opposition, the performance of the artillery and infantry of the XX. Corps was noteworthy. The strength of the enemy position has already been described. The artillery to support the attack of the 60th and 74th Divisions consisted of seventy-six 18-pdrs., twenty-four 4.5-inch howitzers, eight 60-pdrs., and eight 6-inch howitzers—a total of 116 guns, of which all but sixteen were light pieces, for bombardment on a front of over five thousand yards and for counter-battery work. Now

this is approximately the same proportion of artillery as a corps of two divisions may expect to dispose of in mobile warfare under our present organisation. It is of course a very much smaller proportion than was normal in France, where, from 1916 onwards, a gun to every ten yards of the front of attack was usual. The infantry, however, contained a much higher proportion of seasoned and experienced soldiers than was possible in France, where the very heavy casualties caused constant replacement. Moreover, it had been possible to give the troops a comparatively long period of special training before the battle. For these reasons the attack on Beersheba and its results are worth close consideration. They seem to show that the potentialities of well-trained troops against entrenched positions are higher than many believed after the experiences of fighting on the Western front.

The difficulties of the mounted troops in overcoming the resistance at Tel es Saba confirm the lessons of the engagements at Rafa and Magdhaba as to the need of supplementing the fire power of cavalry by additional artillery with a heavier shell. Tanks would, of course, have been invaluable to the mounted troops in this fight and would have enabled Beersheba to have been taken earlier and with fewer casualties. The vulnerability of mounted troops to the air was emphasised. A large proportion of the casualties in the Desert Mounted Corps was due to air attack, and it was mainly because the squadrons had been scattered to escape from air attack that it took so long to collect Grant's brigade for the final charge.

This charge was a gallant affair, and deserves all the praise which has been bestowed on it. It showed yet again how great is the protection from fire effect given by speed of movement. It may be urged that the Turks shot badly. But they probably shot no worse than the very great majority of troops would in similar circumstances. It requires extremely well-trained and disciplined units to adjust their sights calmly and to produce good fire effect in the face of galloping horsemen. Moreover, in this and in other charges in this campaign, the clouds of dust raised by the leading squadrons formed quite an effective screen to the formation

and movements of the units in rear and prevented accurate ranging or shooting by the enemy. The most vulnerable moment of a charge is usually when it reaches its objective and loses its impetus. Thus most of the Australian casualties were incurred in the fighting round the trenches when the troopers halted and dismounted. Fortunately, the Turks were for the most part demoralised by the suddenness of the onset, and surrendered readily.

The moral results of the charge were even greater than the material gains. It set the pace for the whole campaign, inspiring the brigade which carried it out with immense confidence and all the other mounted troops with a spirit of rivalry and emulation. And this demonstration of the power of mounted men to ride home on their infantry undoubtedly shook the nerve of the Turks.

### *3. The Breaking of the Turkish Line*

The capture of Beersheba with its wells mainly intact, and the almost complete destruction of the enemy's 27th Division, formed an auspicious opening to General Allenby's operations. But the real crisis lay in the next few days. It has been explained that the intention was that the XX. Corps and the Desert Mounted Corps should strike at and round the left of the main enemy position with as brief a delay as possible after the capture of Beersheba, before the enemy could reinforce or withdraw his threatened wing. It had always been foreseen that an interval of at least forty-eight hours would be needed to develop the water in Beersheba, to reconnoitre the Turkish works, which had up till now been seen only from the air, to move troops and guns into position and to complete the preparations for the attack. The plan provided that the attention of the Turkish Command should during this interval be occupied with an attack on Gaza by the XXI. Corps. The actual date of this attack had been left open till after the capture of Beersheba. It was to precede the main attack on the Turkish left by twenty-four to forty-eight hours. So that the date of this latter—which again was dependent mainly on the progress of development of water in Beersheba—had first to be determined.

The first reports of the water were favourable, and seemed to indicate that the supplies required would soon be available. In addition to the immediate daily needs, it was essential to provide a reserve so that the striking force could advance from Beersheba with all animals watered and with a day's ration of water in hand.

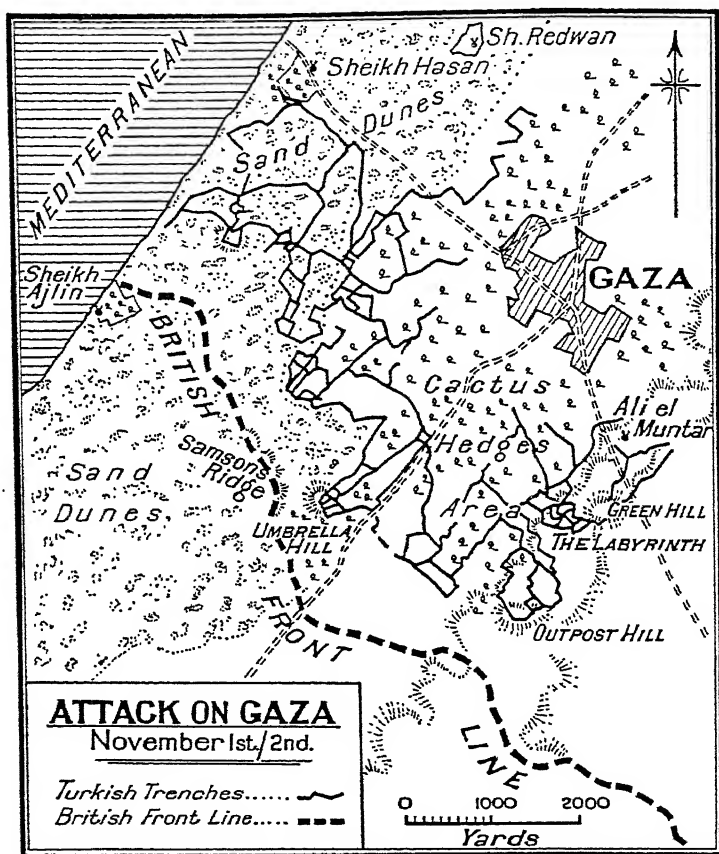
Though all the wells in the town had been prepared for demolition, the Turk had in the end been so hustled that few of the charges had been fired. This gave reason to the Commander-in-Chief to hope that there would be no great delay in meeting all requirements. He accordingly decided on the morning after the battle that the attack on the Turkish left could take place on November 3rd or early on November 4th. The attack of the XXI. Corps on Gaza was therefore fixed for the night of November 1st/2nd.

The front of attack chosen lay in the belt of sandhills between the sea beach and the impenetrable maze of cactus which rendered Gaza practically impregnable from the south. These sandhills are from one hundred to one hundred and fifty feet high. The sand is loose and heavy, making the movement of infantry very slow ; this was the principal reason that the assault was made under cover of darkness. The Turkish defences were strong, in considerable depth, and well-wired. The trenches were stoutly revetted with sandbags and timber.

The front of the attack extended for over five thousand yards, from Umbrella Hill to the sea, and the depth to which it was proposed to penetrate varied from about one thousand yards on the right at Umbrella Hill to over three thousand yards on the extreme left, where the objective was Sheikh Hasan, overlooking the anchorage for the town of Gaza. The distance between the British and Turkish front lines varied between five hundred yards opposite Umbrella Hill and one thousand yards on the left.

The bombardment of the Gaza defences had opened on October 27th and had continued with gradually increasing severity. The artillery of the XXI. Corps comprised sixty-six medium guns (sixteen 60-pdrs., thirty-eight 6-inch howitzers, ten 8-inch howitzers), two 6-inch guns, one hundred and eight 18-pdrs., thirty-six 4.5-inch howitzers (the

divisional artilleries of the 52nd, 54th and 75th Divisions), and eight mountain guns—a total of 218 pieces. In addition, one cruiser, four monitors, and other war craft shelled important objectives in rear of the Turkish lines. The assault



MAP X.

was undertaken by the 54th Division (Major-General Hare), with the 156th Brigade of the 52nd Division attached, and was carried out in two phases.

The first phase, which took place at 11 p.m. on November 1st, consisted in the storming of Umbrella Hill, which projected from the Turkish lines and flanked the approach



to their trenches further west. It was successfully assaulted by the 7th Scottish Rifles of the 156th Brigade, who carried all their objectives by 11.30 p.m. A pause of four hours had been arranged between the first and second phases, to give the enemy time to settle down after the Umbrella Hill attack and to persuade him that this was merely an isolated operation. There were of course obvious risks in the method adopted, but it was important to secure Umbrella Hill before advancing further west, and it was hoped that the interval of four hours would be sufficient to lull the enemy's suspicions of further attack on the same night. As it turned out, this was so. For some hours after the capture of Umbrella Hill the Turkish artillery was active, but it died down shortly before 3 a.m., the hour fixed for the second phase. At 3 a.m., under cover of ten minutes' intense bombardment, the main attack was made, and was successful. Six tanks rendered valuable support, in spite of the unsuitability of the sand for their manoeuvre. At 6.30 a.m. the furthest objective, Sheikh Hasan, was captured. The final objectives were reached everywhere, except in the centre, where some of the Turkish rear trenches resisted the assault of the 163rd Brigade. On one portion of their front the Turks had laid land mines which exploded by contact and blew up the leading wave of one of the storming battalions.

Some 550 prisoners, three guns and thirty machine guns were taken and a thousand Turks were afterwards buried on the field. The losses of the XXI. Corps were, however, heavy, about 350 killed, 350 missing and 2,000 wounded.

The attack had been most skilfully planned and gallantly executed and had fulfilled its purpose of fixing the garrison of Gaza and compelling its reinforcement. The capture of Skeikh Hasan turned the flank of almost the whole of the prepared defences of the town and seriously menaced the Turkish position. The enemy's losses during the bombardment and attack had been extremely heavy and obliged him to add a division from his reserve to the garrison of Gaza.

To turn again to the right flank. Before the capture of Beersheba it had only been possible to determine in outline

the further operations of the XX. Corps and Desert Mounted Corps. It was the intention of General Chetwode to advance with the divisions of his corps in the same order as at Beersheba, if the situation permitted. The 53rd Division on the left was to make a frontal attack on the Kauwukah system of trenches, while the 60th and 74th in that order from the right were to take the extreme left of the Turkish prepared position in flank and rear, aiming at Tel esh Sheria. The 10th Division was to form the reserve. Further north, the Desert Mounted Corps was to make for Tel en Nejile, where a large water supply was believed to be available. The Camel Corps Brigade was to protect the right of the XX. Corps and to keep touch between it and the cavalry. Such was the design which had been sketched in the minds of the British commanders for the second phase of the operations against the Turkish left. But it had been left open to modification as circumstances demanded.

It had for instance been foreseen that infantry might be required to assist the Camel Brigade and other mounted troops in the task of protecting the right of the XX. Corps. And in fact a very short study of the ground convinced General Chetwode that a strong force would be needed in the hills north of Beersheba to give security to the right flank of his attack towards Sheria. Accordingly on November 1st, the day after the capture of Beersheba, the 53rd Division, with the Camel Brigade on its right, moved on Towal Abu Jerwal, about six miles north of Beersheba. The 10th Division moved up from Shellal to take the place of the 53rd Division about Abu Irgeig.

Of the Desert Mounted Corps, the Anzac Mounted Division had on November 1st pushed steadily northwards between the Hebron Road and Towal Abu Jerwal, in the hope of finding sufficient supplies of water in this area to relieve the congestion at Beersheba, where the Australian Mounted Division remained in reserve. The Yeomanry Mounted Division was still at Shellal watching the centre.

The course that events took on the right flank during the next few days was determined by two circumstances—the decision of the Turks to employ their reserves in a

counter-stroke to the north of Beersheba, and the failure of the water supplies at and around Beersheba to come up to the original expectations of the British commanders.

Immediately on hearing of the issue of the fight at Beersheba, the German staff of the Yilderim force ordered its recapture by the Seventh Army, which was to be assisted by the Eighth Army if necessary. There can have been little real grasp of the situation either by the Yilderim staff or the Seventh Army staff, both of which had only very recently arrived on the front. Kress von Kressenstein, the experienced commander of the Eighth Army, seems to have had some inkling of the British commander's design, and to have realised the danger to the Turkish left flank. He took the 19th Division from his reserve and hurried it over to the left to assist the Seventh Army in parrying the threat. But the Turkish command was still very far from realising either the weight or direction of the impending blow. Misled by the energetic patrolling of the Anzac squadrons up to El Dhaheriye, on the Hebron Road, and by the activities of Colonel Newcombe's raiding force north of El Dhaheriye, it seems to have credited the British with the intention of a wide turning movement north of Beersheba, or even of a cavalry raid up the Hebron Road towards Jerusalem.

Newcombe's party of under a hundred men had established itself astride the road a few miles south of Hebron, and had so alarmed the enemy that they sent no fewer than six battalions against it—three of a depot regiment at Hebron, and three from Sheria—which compelled the surrender of the detachment on November 2nd, after a spirited resistance. Its presence may have done something to influence the eccentric direction of the Turkish counter-stroke.

Thus on November 2nd, while General Chetwode and General Chauvel were maturing the decisive assault on Sheria, a Turkish force, comprising the 3rd Cavalry Division, the 19th Division, part of the 24th, and the remnants of the 27th, was hastily being collected to drive the British flank guard back to Beersheba. The fighting centred round a dominating height some ten miles north of Beersheba, Tel

el Khuweilfeh, which not only gave observation over all the surrounding country, but commanded the best supplies of water in the neighbourhood. Its importance from both these aspects had been realised by the commander of the Desert Mounted Corps, who ordered the 7th Mounted Brigade to advance early on the morning of November 2nd and to seize the hill. The brigade met with strong opposition and failed to capture the *tel*, so the 53rd Division and 1st A.L.H. Brigade received orders on the night of November 2nd/3rd to advance on the 3rd and to overcome the enemy resistance. The Turks were, however, also reinforced, and a hard day's fighting ended with little change on either side.

Meanwhile the question of water was causing the gravest anxiety to the commanders of the XX. Corps and Desert Mounted Corps. Two factors had falsified the first optimistic conclusions. In the first place, they had hoped that at least a proportion of the mounted troops could be watered north and north-east of Beersheba, where Intelligence reports had indicated the existence of considerable supplies. Reconnaissance produced most disappointing results, and in the end all the mounted troops operating north of the town had to return to Beersheba to water. Secondly, the calculations had been made on the basis of troops working on a reduced ration of water. As it happened, a particularly strong and hot *khamisin* blew on the days following the capture of Beersheba, raising clouds of fine dust, which increased the thirst of man and beast and greatly raised the consumption of water. The result was that the water situation became acute. On November 4th the Australian Mounted Division had to be ordered back to Karm to water, and on the same day it was definitely decided to postpone the main attack on Hareira and Sheria till November 6th. The Commander-in-Chief only took these decisions with the greatest reluctance, since the delay offered the enemy an opportunity of evading the blow by retirement to a line in rear. Water was, however, a ruling factor throughout this campaign, and it was useless to make a further large advance without an assured water-base at Beersheba.

The fighting round Khuweilfeh continued throughout the

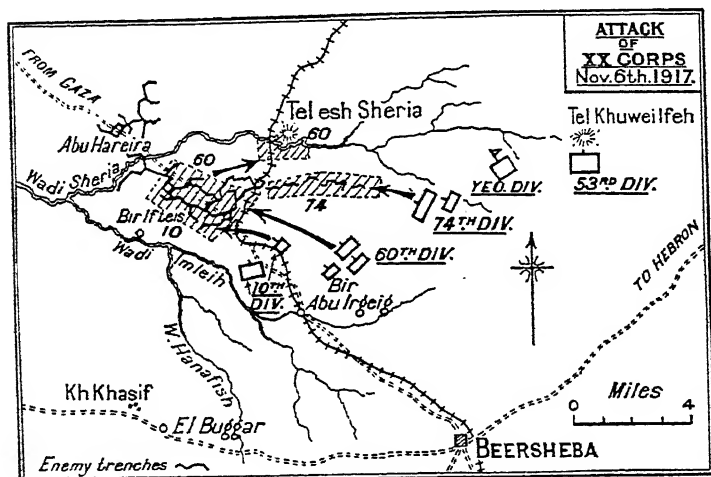
4th and 5th, with little advantage to either combatant. Repeated Turkish efforts failed to dislodge our mounted troops from Ras el Nagb, a height to the east of Tel Khuweilfeh, while the 53rd Division was equally unable to establish itself on the *tel*. It was bitter, disjointed fighting, in which the advantage lay wholly with the defender. The difficulty of bringing up regular supplies of food, water, and ammunition over the twelve miles of rough, stony track which lay between the front line and Beersheba entailed considerable hardship on the troops, whose powers of endurance were taxed to the utmost.

The administrative difficulties and the necessity for continual relief of the mounted brigades to enable them to return to Beersheba to water the horses made concerted effort very hard to arrange. Ras el Nagb, originally seized by the 7th Mounted Brigade, was subsequently held in succession by the 1st A.L.H. Brigade, the 5th Mounted Brigade, the New Zealand Brigade, and the Imperial Camel Corps Brigade. It was finally decided to organise a combined attack on the Turkish positions at Khuweilfeh for the morning of November 6th, simultaneously with the main attack of the XX. Corps.

The group of works which formed the left of the Turkish prepared position about Sheria began at the strong Hareira Redoubt, and was continued south-east for about 7,000 yards by the Rushdi and Kauwukah systems of trenches up to the railway south of Sheria Station. This defensive system had been gradually strengthened and improved over a period of six months. The works were wired and in considerable depth, and commanded an extensive field of fire over the open rolling plain in front. The extreme flank had originally rested just west of the railway, but later the position had been pushed out for some 6,000 yards further by a single line of trenches dug to the east of the railway. These trenches were well sited, but were unprotected by wire entanglements.

On the night of November 5th/6th the British striking wing (Desert Mounted Corps and XX. Corps) had completed its dispositions for the decisive attack, and stood as follows.

The Yeomanry Mounted Division (Major-General Barrow), after its relief at Shellal by the Australian Mounted Division, had moved across to the foothills on the left of the 53rd Division's line, and had there relieved the 74th Division, enabling the latter to concentrate for attack. On the evening of November 6th a special detachment was formed under General Barrow for the defence of the right flank. It consisted of the Yeomanry Mounted Division, the 53rd Division, the Imperial Camel Brigade, and the New Zealand Brigade of



MAP XI.

the Anzac Mounted Division, the remainder of which was about Beersheba.\* The 60th Division had come up into line between the 74th and 10th. On the left of the 10th Division the Australian Mounted Division watched the wide gap of some fifteen miles between the XX. and XXI. Corps.

The general direction of attack of the XX. Corps was from south-east to north-west, so as to take the Turkish entrenchments in enfilade as much as possible and roll up

\* Up to November 6th unity of command had been lacking in the operations round Khuweilfeh. The 53rd Division had been under XX. Corps and the mounted troops under Desert Mounted Corps, except that the Camel Brigade had been at one time under 53rd Division, at another time under Desert Mounted Corps, and at another time partly under 53rd Division, partly under Desert Mounted Corps.

the line from east to west. The 74th Division, on the right, was to open the battle by assaulting from the flank the line of Turkish trenches which lay east of the railway. During this assault the infantry of the 60th Division and one brigade of the 10th Division were to approach the Kauwukah system of trenches sufficiently closely to cover the deployment of their divisional artilleries within wire-cutting range of the enemy's line. The 74th Division, on reaching the railway, was to cover the right of the 60th Division, to assist it by such artillery fire as could be spared from its own front, and to seize Sheria and its water supply. The 60th Division and one brigade of the 10th Division were to assault the Kauwukah system so soon as their commanders judged the artillery preparation to have been effective. After capturing the Kauwukah system, the 60th Division was to turn north and assist the 74th Division to make good Sheria and the high ground north of it, which was at all costs to be occupied before nightfall on the 6th. On November 7th the 60th Division was to come under the Desert Mounted Corps for its advance on Huj, while the 10th Division, two brigades of which were to form the XX. Corps reserve on November 6th, was to complete the defeat of the Turkish left by capturing the Rushdi system and the Hareira Redoubt.

The Desert Mounted Corps was to press forward so soon as the enemy's resistance was broken and to make for Huj and Jemmameh, the principal water areas behind the Turkish line. The wider turning movement by Tel en Nejile originally ordered for the mounted troops had been abandoned in consequence of the reported insufficiency of water at that place. It will be noted how scattered the troops of the Desert Mounted Corps were, as a result of the water situation and of the enemy counter-stroke north of Beersheba.

The 74th Division began its advance at 5 a.m. on November 6th, with its three brigades in echelon from the left, the particular task of the rear brigade being the protection of the right flank. The division bore the brunt of the day's fighting, and had a hard task. From its starting

point to the railway was a distance of about five miles, over open country almost devoid of cover. The enemy works were skilfully sited and obstinately held. It was impossible over the long advance to arrange for continuous artillery support, and the infantry, who swept forward at a great pace, had often to rely only on covering fire from machine guns. Nor was it easy to locate the enemy works, the more recent of which were uncharted on the trench maps compiled from aeroplane photographs. Yet by 8.30 a.m. the leading brigade had advanced between two and three miles, and by about 1.30 p.m. had captured all its objectives. The 74th Division, which had been formed from dismounted yeomanry and bore a broken spur as its divisional sign, certainly showed the cavalry spirit in the pace at which it made this assault.

Meantime the 60th and 10th Divisions had worked up to the main Kauwukah system, on which the artillery carried out a methodical bombardment. Soon after noon the wire was sufficiently cut to enable the assault to be launched. The Kauwukah and Rushdi systems were rapidly overrun, and at 4.30 p.m. two brigades of the 60th Division turned north for Sheria, on which the 74th Division was already advancing. It was intended to carry the great mound of Tel esh Sheria, which dominates the wadi crossing, by a bayonet attack in the dark, but the Turks had set fire to a great depot of stores and munitions before evacuating Sheria Station, and the glare of the flames so exposed the line of advance across the wadi that it was judged prudent to postpone the attempt.

On the right there was again very hard fighting in the Khuweilfeh area on the 6th. The 158th Brigade of the 53rd Division and the 3rd Battalion of the Camel Brigade assaulted at dawn, and managed at last to secure a footing on the main Khuweilfeh Ridge. The Turks by a fierce counter-attack drove in part of the attacking line for a time, but could not wholly dislodge it. It was their final effort. During the 7th the opposing forces in this part of the battle front, spent and weary, continued their long-drawn-out struggle without much change, but towards the



evening the enemy sullenly drew off in conformity with the general retirement of their forces.

The troops of the Anzac Mounted Division, the Camel Brigade, and the 53rd Division had few trophies and many hard knocks to show for the six days' bitter and continuous fighting in this area. But their stubborn perseverance in face of the difficulties and hardships which the rough, barren hills imposed on them had been of the highest service, and had contributed greatly to the success of General Allenby's plan; for the Turks had now no reserves left to repair the breach made at Sheria. This breach was widened at dawn on the 7th by the capture of the great mound of Tel esh Sheria by the 60th Division, and of the strong Hareira Redoubt by the 10th Division.

On the left of the line the XXI. Corps was, during the very early hours of the 7th, advancing with little opposition over those formidable defences which had so long barred their entry to Palestine. The famous Ali Muntar knoll, the key to Gaza, had been occupied soon after dawn of the 7th. The Turks had, in fact, evacuated Gaza and were in full retreat.

As the result of a week's fighting the Turkish armies had been driven into the open, after heavy losses, and had been forced to abandon the whole of the Gaza—Beersheba line, which they had prepared so carefully and had held so stubbornly for the previous nine months. The next stage was the exploitation of this success, in which the mounted troops were to play the leading role.

The main features of this Gaza—Beersheba battle from the British side are the long and careful preparation of the stroke, the success of the measures taken to deceive the enemy as to the real direction and purpose of the main blow, and the influence exerted over operations by the water question. These features have already been sufficiently emphasised in the account of the operations.

It is of interest also to consider the battle from the Turkish point of view. Their position—a very extended one for the size of their force—was practically dictated by the direction of their railway and the existence of the water supplies at

Beersheba. The lack of depth in their defensive works, except at Gaza, must be explained by the fact that their leaders did not believe it possible for our administrative services to overcome the difficulties of supplying a large force in the barren hills about Beersheba and their left.

The counter-stroke north of Beersheba was a bold move, typical of German rather than of Turkish strategy. It depended for its success on the British commander allowing himself to be diverted from his original plan and drawn into fighting the principal action on ground not of his own choosing. General Allenby was not the man to be easily turned aside from his course, and he detached only the minimum number of troops to meet the threat. Though it failed of its main object, the Turkish counter-stroke had, as will be seen, some effect in disorganising the arrangements for pursuit.\*

It is possible that a counter-stroke directed against the other flank of the XX. Corps and its communications by Karm to Shellal would have been more effective. The ground was, however, very open, and the right flank of the counter-attacking force would have been exposed.

Left to themselves, it is likely that the Turkish commanders would have begun a retreat very much earlier, a step which would have greatly increased our difficulties. But their German commanders and staff would have nothing of such suggestions, and persisted in ordering a counter-attack. This attempt to graft their own fighting methods on to an army whose natural tactical procedure was quite different was repeated in subsequent operations of this campaign.

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\* Evidence from the Turkish side suggests that the movements of Turkish troops north of Beersheba were defensive rather than offensive (see O.H., Vol. II., p. 82).

## ORDER OF BATTLE.—E.E.F.

OCTOBER, 1917—THIRD BATTLE OF GAZA.

DESERT MOUNTED CORPS (Lieut.-General Sir H. Chauvel).

*Yeomanry Mounted Division* (Major-General G. de S. Barrow).

6th, 8th, 22nd Mounted Brigades.

20th Brigade R.H.A.

*Australian and New Zealand Mounted Division* (Major-General E. W. C. Chaytor).

1st, 2nd A.L.H., N.Z.M.R. Brigades.

18th Brigade R.H.A.

*Australian Mounted Division* (Major-General H. W. Hodgson).

3rd, 4th, A.L.H., 5th Mounted Brigades.

19th Brigade R.H.A.

*7th Mounted Brigade* (Brig.-General J. T. Wigan).*Imperial Camel Corps Brigade* (Brig.-General C. L. Smith).

2nd (Imperial) Batt.

3rd (A. and N.Z.) Batt.

4th (A. and N.Z.) Batt.

Hong Kong and Singapore Camel Battery.

XX. CORPS (Lieut.-General Sir R. W. Chetwode, Bart.).

*10th (Irish) Division* (Major-General J. R. Longley).

29th, 30th, 31st Infantry Brigade.

*53rd (Welsh) Division* (Major-General S. F. Mott).

158th, 159th, 160th Infantry Brigades.

*60th (London) Division* (Major-General J. S. M. Shea).

179th, 180th, 181st Infantry Brigade.

*74th (Yeomanry) Division* (Major-General E. S. Girdwood).

229th, 230th, 231st Infantry Brigades.

*Corps Cavalry Regiment—*

1/2nd County of London Yeomanry.

*Corps Artillery—96th Heavy Artillery Group—*

15th Heavy Battery (4-60-pdrs.).

91st „ „ (4-60-pdrs.).

181st „ „ (4-60-pdrs.).

378th Siege „ (4-6-in. Hows.).



*Palestine Brigade* comprising :

5th (Corps) Wing . . . . Deir el Belah.

No. 14 Squadron, R.F.C. . . . Deir el Belah.

No. 113 Squadron, R.F.C. . . . Sheikh Nuran.

No. 21 Kite Balloon Company, consisting of :

No. 49 Kite Balloon Section . . Sheikh Shabasi.

No. 50 „ „ „ . . . Wadi Ghuzze.

N.B.—No. 14 Squadron was allotted to XXI. Corps  
and two flights of No. 113 Squadron to XX. Corps  
and one flight to Desert Corps.

40th Wing Headquarters . . . . Seir el Belah.

No. 67 Squadron, A.F.C. . . . Shiekh Nuran.

No. 11 Squadron, R.F.C. . . . Deir el Belah.

*Special Squadron formed from the 20th Training Wing at Aboukir.*—In addition a special service squadron was formed on October 24th for duty at Nuran, and was under the direct orders of Palestine Brigade for operations.

The work allotted to this special squadron consisted of bombing raids on enemy camps, dumps, trench works and battery positions.

*Aircraft Park.*—“ X ” Aircraft Park at Abbassia, with an advanced stores section at Kantara, was responsible for the supplies to the R.F.C. in Palestine.

## CHAPTER V

### THE PURSUIT THROUGH PHILISTIA AND THE TAKING OF JERUSALEM

“Brevi tamen tempore, copiis idoneis instructis, modo Barsa-beam modo Gazam impugnans claustra Judææ effregit et hieme prima Hierosolyma victor pedes est ingressus.”—(*Oxford Oration to Lord Allenby.*)

1. *The Pursuit through Philistia.*—Beginning of the pursuit—Slow progress—The charge at Huj—Fight on the Wadi Hesi—Advance towards Junction Station—Action of El Mughar—Occupation of Jaffa.

2. *The First Attempt on Jerusalem.*—Decision for immediate advance on Jerusalem—The plan—Failure of first attempt.

3. *The Capture of Jerusalem.*—Turkish counter-attacks—XX. Corps attack—Fall of Jerusalem—Results of the campaign.

4. *The Winter of 1917-18.*—Passage of the River Auja—Turkish counter-attack on Jerusalem—Advance of XX. Corps.

(SEE MAPS VIII., XII., XIII., XIV., XV.)

#### 1. *The Pursuit through Philistia*

THE ideal exploitation by mounted troops is not a pursuit, but an interception. It aims to strike, not the rear of the retreating enemy columns, where the sting is, but the less protected flanks or head, to cut in on the line of retirement at the most favourable time and place—a defile for choice—to head off as large a portion as possible of the withdrawing force, and to hold it till the infantry can come up and complete its destruction. Such was the manœuvre General Allenby had always contemplated as the sequel to the breaking of the Gaza—Beersheba line by his infantry and artillery, and such was the aim he continued to urge on the commander of his mounted force while any hope still remained of its accomplishment.

November 7th and 8th were the two critical days. During these it seemed that at least a considerable force of Turks was within the grasp of the mounted troops and could be

prevented from escaping north. The story of these two days is worth relating in some detail.

Early in the afternoon of November 6th orders were issued to the Desert Mounted Corps to move up in readiness to take advantage of the expected success of the XX. Corps. The Anzacs were to march from Beersheba to a position behind the Yeomanry Mounted Division, which was engaged in protecting the right of the XX. Corps. The Australian Division was to move forward from Karm to Kh. Imleih, directly behind the XX. Corps. Anzac and Australian Divisions each left behind a brigade. Of the former, the New Zealand Brigade remained at Beersheba as a reserve to Barrow's protective detachment; of the latter, the 3rd A.L.H. Brigade was still watching the gap on the left of the XX. Corps. In the evening, so soon as the success of the infantry attack was known, General Chauvel was ordered to press forward on Jemmameh and Huj with all available troops, the 60th Division of the XX. Corps being put under him to assist his advance. By orders issued a little before midnight of the 6th/7th, he directed the Anzacs on Ameidat Station as their first objective, and the Australians to concentrate at Sheria, whither the 3rd A.L.H. Brigade was summoned to rejoin them.\* It will be observed that as a result of the Turkish counter-stroke north of Beersheba the mounted troops were compelled to penetrate through a gap instead of the far easier and more effective method of sweeping round a flank.

Circumstances imposed a heavy handicap on General Chauvel from the outset. The route that would have been most favourable to his purpose—due north along the railway by Tel en Nejile, and thence west to intercept the Turkish retreat about El Medjel, or even further north—had been barred to him by the absence of sufficient water supplies on it. One complete division of his corps—Barrow's Yeomanry—and a brigade of the Anzacs were employed on protective work in the hills north of Beersheba, and were not available. The Anzac Division had been engaged in

\* At the time when these orders were issued the 60th Division was believed to be already in possession of Tel esh Sheria.

hard fighting and marching ever since October 31st, and the Australian Division, though less worn, had had little rest. Both divisions had just made a march of between fifteen and twenty miles. The horses had been on short rations of water and forage for a week.

Progress during the 7th was most disappointing. Chaytor's Anzac Division captured Ameidat Station with some four hundred prisoners and large quantities of stores, but was then held up for the remainder of the day by a Turkish rearguard about Tel Abu Dilakh, a few miles further north. It must be remembered that the right flank of the Anzacs was exposed to the large Turkish force still facing Barrow's detachment in the hills. The Australian Division made practically no headway at all. As already told, the 60th Division did not secure the great mound of Tel esh Sheria till dawn on the 7th. The Turks then took up a strong position on rising ground a mile or so to the north and checked the further advance of the infantry. The leading brigade of the Australian Division was ordered to clear the opposition from in front of the 60th Division. But the direction given to it led to a purely frontal attack, which was held up a few hundred yards in advance of the infantry line. There it remained till dusk, when the reserve brigade of the 60th was put in and drove the Turks out of their position. Darkness put an end to further operations.

Meanwhile General Bulfin on the left pressed the pursuit of the Turks withdrawn from Gaza as energetically as his limited resources in transport would allow. The 52nd Division was sent forward along the sea-coast. Its leading brigade, the 157th, reached and crossed the Wadi Hesi near its mouth just as dark fell; it was followed by the 155th Brigade, which crossed the wadi in the course of the night. The 54th Division occupied the defences of Gaza itself, while the Imperial Service Cavalry Brigade pressed past Gaza towards Beit Hanun, in front of which it was still held up at nightfall.

A Turkish rearguard, seemingly unperturbed by the presence of British forces behind both its flanks, maintained itself throughout the day in the Tank and Atawineh re-



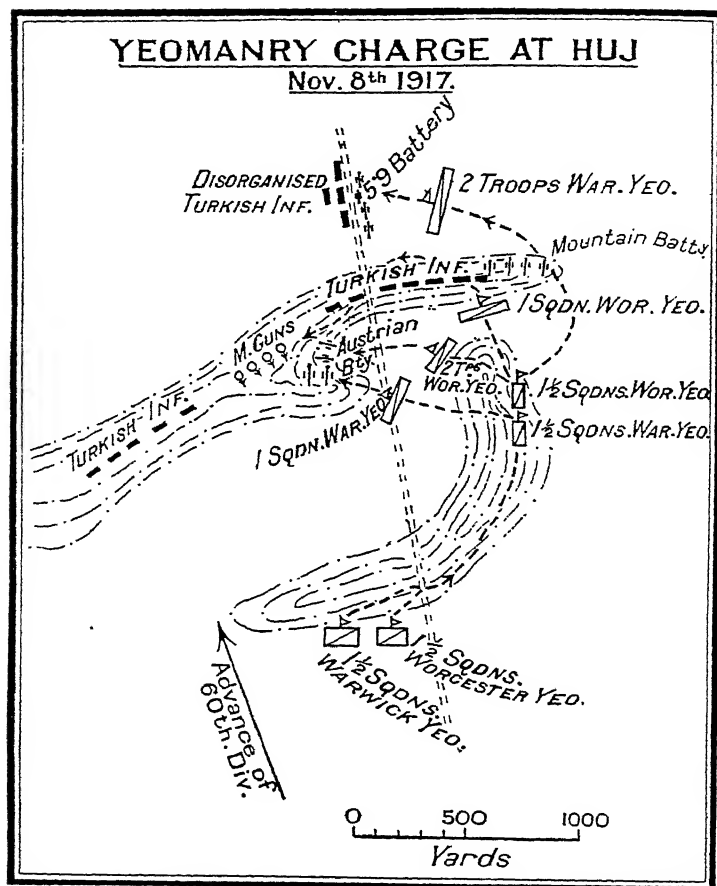
doubts, the one portion of the front line still intact. Its artillery, firing away the reserve stock of shells which would otherwise have had to be abandoned, caused considerable annoyance to the troops in Gaza. A more serious effect of the presence of this rearguard was the delay it occasioned to the march of the transport columns which were being hurried across from the XX. to the XXI. Corps, to enable the latter to take up the advance along the coastal plain.

The orders to the Desert Mounted Corps for November 8th enjoined a rapid advance on Huj and Jemmameh and thence north-west, with the object of closing the narrow corridor which still remained open for the escape of the Turkish rearguard about Atawineh, and of cutting off other enemy forces engaged with the 52nd Division on the Wadi Hesi. But the Turkish covering detachments fought stubbornly, taking full advantage of the facilities for delaying action offered by the open rolling plains. Thus the British mounted troops, though they made considerable progress and gleaned a steady crop of prisoners, did not succeed in intercepting any large body of the enemy. On the extreme right Barrow's detachment was called off its pursuit of the Turks who had retired from Khuweilfeh: the Yeomanry Mounted Division and the Camel Brigade were to rejoin Desert Mounted Corps, but the New Zealand Brigade was left at Beersheba. The Anzac Division was reinforced by the 7th Mounted Brigade in its place, but could not reach Jemmameh till after 3 p.m. It was later still before the Australian Division and the 60th Division occupied Huj.

A feature of the day's fighting was a fine charge made by a small body of Yeomanry. The 60th Division had been pressing on all day towards Huj and overcoming the opposition of the Turkish rearguards with the dash and endurance which its Londoners always displayed in action. About 2 p.m., when still a mile or two distant from Huj, the leading companies came under a heavy and well-aimed artillery fire. The enemy had placed several batteries, with a strong escort of infantry and machine guns, on a commanding ridge, in order to cover the evacuation of the Eighth Army

Headquarters and to give time for the destruction of the stores and ammunition which could not be removed.

Major General Shea, the commander of the 60th Division,



MAP XII.

was reconnoitring with his advanced troops in an armoured car lent to him by the Desert Mounted Corps. He saw that approach to the guns over the open ground would be a slow and costly operation for his infantry, and sought assistance from the nearest mounted troops on his right, Yeomanry of

the 5th Mounted Brigade of the Australian Division. Lieut.-Colonel Cheape of the Warwickshire Yeomanry collected one and a half squadrons of his own regiment and one and a half squadrons of the Worcestershire Yeomanry (ten troops in all), and led them at once against the guns. Unfortunately no covering fire for the mounted attack was possible, since the machine gun squadron of the brigade and all the pack horses with the Hotchkiss rifles had been sent to water early in the morning and had not yet rejoined. The R.H.A. batteries, armed with an 18-pdr. gun, had been outpaced.

Taking advantage of the cover given by a slight ridge (see Map XII.), the Yeomanry reached a position about a thousand yards distant from, and to the flank of, the guns. They now came under fire from the infantry escort. The leading squadron of the Worcestershires charged and dispersed this infantry, and then turned and rode in at the guns from the flank. Meanwhile the squadron of the Warwickshires, supported by the remaining two troops of the Worcestershires, rode straight at the guns and at the machine guns which covered them. The remaining two troops of Warwickshires charged some Turks seen withdrawing from the position. All three attacks rode home. Eleven guns, four machine guns and about seventy prisoners were taken, and a large number of the personnel of the batteries—Germans and Austrians besides Turks—who all stood to their guns to the last, were killed with the sword. The casualties of the Yeomanry were, however, extremely high. Of twelve officers, the three squadron commanders were killed and six others wounded; of 158 men, 26 were killed and 40 wounded; of 170 horses, 100 were killed.

The success of this charge is a remarkable example of the power of mobility in the attack. It was only their resolute speed that gave the Yeomanry their victory, they had no covering fire to aid them, for reasons that have been explained. Nor did they have the advantage of a complete surprise. Though their intervention was sudden and unexpected, it was perceived by the enemy, and their line of advance for the last thousand yards was fully exposed to the fire of guns, machine guns and rifles. Yet the charge got

home. And the enemies they charged were no hunted and demoralised fugitives, but unshaken troops—partly German and Austrian—who were holding at arm's length without difficulty the infantry opposed to them.\*

In considering the evolution of the light armoured vehicle, the cavalry of the future, the lesson of all wars—that in the end speed will prove a better protection than armour—must not be forgotten. The mail-clad knight of 600 years ago was proof against missiles, and so had little need for speed on the battlefield, till the day when he met armour-piercing arrows at Crecy. If the French knights at Crecy could have raised even a hand canter instead of a shambling trot, it is unlikely that even the hardest shooting archers could have kept their line intact. The French, after pondering over the lesson for ten years, increased the weight of their armour and attacked at a walk at Poitiers, to get an even worse beating. Such as survived probably blamed their armourers, and possibly hanged some.

Meantime the 52nd Division was fighting a fierce and gallant little action north of Gaza. As already related, two brigades had by the morning of the 8th crossed the Wadi Hesi near its mouth and had, in the face of some opposition, established themselves on the sand dunes to the north towards Askelon. On their right lay a long ridge (given the name of Sausage Ridge) stretching from Burberah to Deir Sineid, a distance of some three miles. The Turks held the ridge in considerable strength, since it covered the road and railway from Gaza to the north. During the afternoon of the 8th the 155th Brigade moved against this ridge, but before its final assault could develop it was threatened by a counter-attack on the left and had to halt and face north to meet this danger. The arrival on the Wadi Hesi of the 156th Brigade, which had left Sh. Ajlin at 5.30 a.m. that morning, enabled the 157th Brigade to be put in against the southern portion of Sausage Ridge. It gained a footing on the ridge as darkness fell, lost it four times to fierce Turkish counter-attacks, but gathered itself for a last assault and

\* An interesting description of the charge will be found in the "Diary of a Yeomanry M.O.," by Captain O. Teichmann, pp. 182-6.

threw the enemy definitely and finally out of his positions by 9 p.m. The two attacking brigades lost in this action 700 men. In this as in other operations at the time the lack of accurate maps was much felt.

By the evening of the 8th the first stage of the exploitation of the victory had ended. The mounted troops had failed to intercept any large portion of the Turkish forces. The reasons for the slow progress of the Desert Mounted Corps on the 7th and 8th are to be found mainly in the water difficulties. But the fact that only two of the six brigades available were armed with the sword undoubtedly affected their tactics and pace in dealing with the opposition of the Turkish rearguards.

Though the enemy had escaped immediate destruction his situation was still critical. The enterprise of the 52nd Division had precluded any hope of organising a stand on the Wadi Hesi, and the next natural line of defence, the Nahr Sukhereir, was fifteen miles further north. The original rearguards, which had shown so stout a front to the pursuers, were dispersed or exhausted. The reports of the Royal Flying Corps, which had harried the retreating columns continuously with bomb and machine gun, showed that the disorganisation and demoralisation of the Turkish armies was almost complete. Even a direct pursuit if relentlessly pressed might bring about their disintegration. General Allenby accordingly issued orders for November 9th directing the mounted troops with all speed to the objectives Et Tineh—Beit Duras, which would turn the Nahr Sukhereir line.

But the Desert Mounted Corps was incapable for the moment of a further combined or sustained effort. Only one division, the hard-worked Anzacs, had succeeded in watering their horses during the night of the 8th/9th and was ready to advance on the morning of the 9th. The Australian Mounted Division had had little water for forty-eight hours, and the Yeomanry Division only arrived at Huj on the afternoon of the 9th after a long march and was also without water. These two divisions therefore remained to water, while the Anzacs went forward first to El Mejdal and then to Beit Duras and Esdud. A large number of prisoners was

captured, the exhausted Turks offering less resistance on this day than at any other period of their retreat. Had all three divisions been able to advance, the greater part of the Turkish army might have been overrun. Kress von Kressenstein relates how an extraordinary panic was caused at Et Tineh, the Headquarters of the Eighth Army, on this afternoon by a report that the British cavalry had broken through. Troops, ammunition columns and transport scattered in wild disorder, and all means of communication between the Army staff and the troops were destroyed.

Turkish wireless messages intercepted on the 9th showed that the Seventh Army had been ordered by von Falkenhayn to make a counter-attack from the direction of Hebron against the right flank and communications of the British as they advanced along the plain. General Allenby, convinced that the disorganisation of the Hebron group would not allow it to make an effective diversion, decided to disregard this threat, except that the Camel Brigade was moved from Beersheba towards Nejile so as to be on the flank of any attack that might develop from the hills. Actually the Hebron force after an ineffective demonstration on the 10th withdrew to Beit Jibrin.

During the 10th and 11th the pace of the pursuit slackened. A hot exhausting wind added to the trials of the men and animals, and it was becoming increasingly difficult to bring supplies up to the advanced troops. The standard-gauge line was being pushed forward as rapidly as possible, but did not reach Deir Sineid till November 28th. The lack of rolling stock hampered use of the Turkish line from Gaza. The Navy did their best to assist by landing stores in succession at the mouth of the Wadi el Hesi and Wadi Sukhereir as these lines were secured. But only with difficulty could two divisions of the XXI. Corps be sent forward to support the Desert Mounted Corps.

The movements of the force on the 10th and 11th and the positions reached on the evening of the 11th were as follows :—

*Desert Mounted Corps.*—The Australian Division marched from Huj on the night of the 9th/10th (the only night march

during the pursuit) and came up on the right of the Anzacs about Arak el Menshiye and Faluje. The Yeomanry Division also came up on this flank during the 10th, but on the 11th was ordered across to join the Anzacs on the opposite flank, whither the Camel Brigade and the New Zealand Brigade were also moving. The Anzacs established a bridge-head over the Nahr Sukhereir at Jisr Esdud on the 10th and enlarged it on the 11th.

*XXI. Corps.*—The 52nd and 75th Divisions advanced to the line Beit Duras—Esdud. The leading brigade of the 52nd Division had a stiff little fight in front of Esdud on the 10th. The 54th Division and the Imperial Service Cavalry Brigade were halted at Gaza.

*XX. Corps.*—The 53rd Division with the Corps cavalry regiment held a position in the hills north of Beersheba. The 60th Division was halted at Huj and the 10th and 74th at Karm.

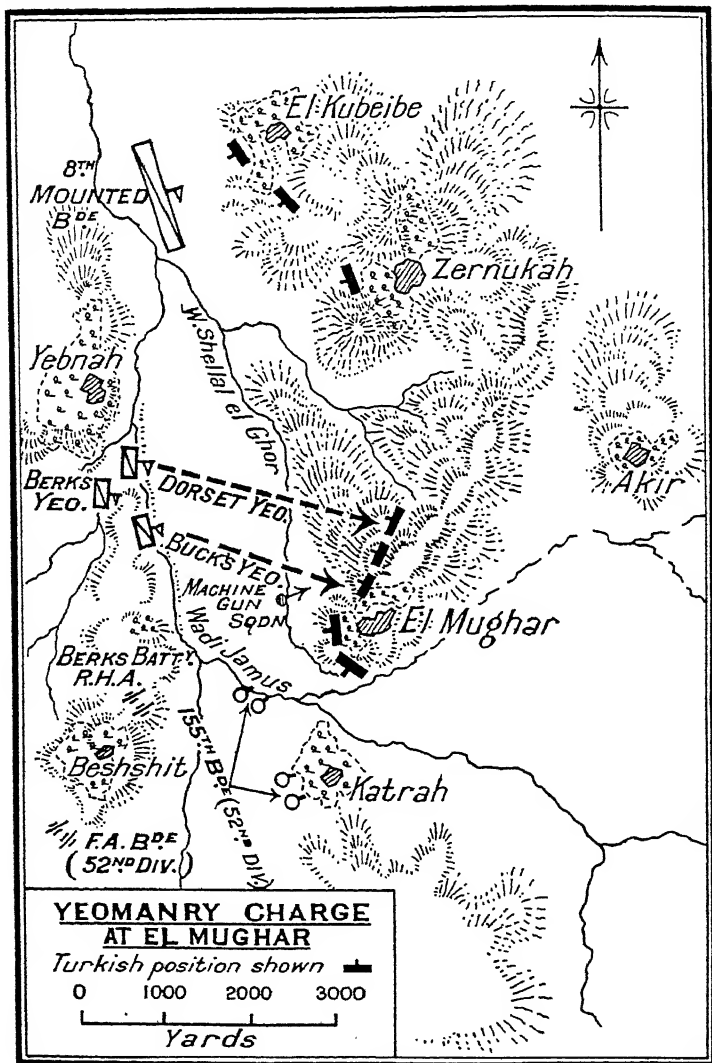
During these days the enemy's resistance stiffened, and it became apparent that he was preparing to make a stand in order to cover the junction of the Jerusalem line with his main railway. He had placed advanced detachments along the Nahr Sukhereir to give time for the organisation and occupation of his main position along the Wadi Surar and Nahr Rubin. General Allenby determined to turn the right flank of the enemy position, which ran almost due north and south, from El Kubeibe to Beit Jibrin. He gave to the Australian Mounted Division the task of safeguarding his eastern flank and of drawing on itself as much of the enemy's attention as possible. The infantry were to attack the enemy's right centre and the other mounted troops to turn his right flank.

During the 12th the force got into position for the attack. On the east the Australian Mounted Division, advancing in the direction of Tel es Safi,\* were heavily counter-attacked by four divisions and driven back a little distance.† On the

\* The most probable site of the Biblical "Gath."

† This was planned by von Falkenhayn as a counterstroke on a large scale, and only the stout resistance of the Australian Division and the weariness of the Turks prevented a serious situation.

other flank the 52nd Division had a hard fight at Burka north of the Wadi Sukhereir. Its capture cost them over



MAP XIII.

four hundred casualties, but opened up an approach to the enemy's main line for the next day.



The Turkish force making this last effort to save the branch railway to Jerusalem probably amounted to no more than 20,000 men. Its position was strategically unsound, since its front lay parallel to the main line of communications with the north, and its northern flank was already almost turned—disadvantages which had been forced on it largely by the hard marching and fighting of the 52nd Division in support of the mounted troops. The tactical insecurity caused by its wide extension over a front of about twenty miles was to some extent compensated for by the natural strength of its defensive line. The country is cultivated, but at this season was bare and open. The numerous villages, usually built on rocky knolls and surrounded by a belt of cactus hedges and plantations, made solid centres of resistance and gave a stout framework to the Turkish position. The most prominent features of the battlefield were two such villages, Katrah and El Mughar, on commanding heights, separated by a wadi (Wadi Jamus) which links the Wadi Surar with the Nahr Rubin. The height on which El Mughar stands is continued north towards Zernukah and El Kubeibe and formed the backbone of the enemy's defence of his threatened right flank.

General Allenby's orders directed the Australian Division of the Desert Mounted Corps to attack to the south of the main Gaza—Junction Station road. The XXI. Corps (75th and 52nd Divisions) was to attack between the road and Katrah towards Junction Station and the railway immediately north of it. The Yeomanry Division, supported by the Anzac Division, was to attack on the left of the XXI. Corps, with the Camel Brigade in the belt of sandhills along the coast. As soon as Junction Station and the railway were reached, the mounted troops were to swing north, to occupy Ramleh and Ludd and to reconnoitre towards Jaffa.

The attack began at 7 a.m. on November 13th. By 10 a.m. the 75th Division, advancing along the main road, had taken Tel et Turmus and Kustineh with little opposition, the 52nd Division had occupied Beshshit, and the Yeomanry Division Yebnah. Now came the struggle. The 75th Division had a hard fight for Mesmiyeh, while the 52nd

Division was definitely held up in front of Katrah and El Mughar, and the Yeomanry could make no impression on the villages of Zernukah and El Kubeibe, which were strongly held. About 2.30 p.m. it was agreed between the G.O.C. 52nd Division and G.O.C. Yeomanry Division that the 6th Mounted Brigade should make a mounted attack on the El Mughar ridge in combination with a renewed assault on Katrah and El Mughar by the Lowlanders of the 52nd Division.

Brig.-General Godwin, commanding the 6th Mounted Brigade, had already got the Bucks and the Dorset Yeomanry under cover in the Wadi Jamus and disposed the Berkshire Battery R.H.A. and six machine guns of the M.G. Squadron to give covering fire. At 3 p.m. the two regiments advanced into the open at a trot in column of squadrons extended to four paces. The distance to be covered was about three thousand yards, exposed to view and to fire the whole way. The squadrons crossed the last thousand yards at a gallop and charged up the steep hillside, except one squadron of the Dorsets on the left, who dismounted on reaching the hill and fought their way to the top on foot. Both regiments gained their objectives on the crest of the ridge, but the Turks still held on in the village of El Mughar, which was eventually cleared by two squadrons of the reserve regiment, the Berkshires, fighting dismounted, and by two battalions of the 155th Brigade of the 52nd Division, which renewed its attack as the mounted troops charged. Fighting in the village continued till 5 p.m.

The spoils of the Yeomanry's fine exploit were two field guns, fourteen machine guns, and over a thousand prisoners; several hundred Turkish dead were counted on the position. The exhaustion of the horses after the long gallop and scramble uphill prevented a pursuit down the far side of the ridge—which was, moreover, very steep—and enabled a certain number of Turks to escape. The 22nd Mounted Brigade, which was to have exploited the success, allowed itself to get held up by some opposition at Akir. The losses of the Yeomanry were 16 killed and 114 wounded, and 265 horses (*i.e.*, 16 per cent. of personnel and 33 per cent. of

horses). The squadron of the Dorsets which dismounted had heavier casualties in horses than the others, which continued the attack mounted. The covering fire of guns and machine guns was most effective. A field artillery brigade of the 52nd Division gave great help by shelling the ridge as soon as its commander saw the Yeomanry attack launched. The remaining machine guns of the Yeomanry (two per regiment) accompanied the attack, and were of great value in consolidating the position and pursuing the enemy with fire. Captured Turkish machine guns were also used for this purpose.

Meantime the 52nd Division had also taken Katrah. The losses of the 155th Brigade at Katrah and El Mughar were close on five hundred, but the Turkish losses in killed, wounded and prisoners in these places must have been well over two thousand. The 75th Division had pressed on through Mesmiyeh, where they took three hundred prisoners. Although the brigade detailed to capture Junction Station halted short of its objective in the darkness, the Turkish resistance was broken and the Turkish forces in full retreat.

Next morning, the 14th, a brigade of the 75th Division, effectively aided by some armoured cars, occupied Junction Station, and the Australian Mounted Division entered Et Tineh. To the north the New Zealand Mounted Brigade fought a brilliant little action at Ayun Kara, near Surafend. Here the Turks made a vigorous counter-attack, and were repulsed by a bayonet charge.

On the 15th the Australian Mounted Division and 75th Division advanced east of Junction Station towards Latron, where the Jaffa—Jerusalem road debouches from the hills. The Anzac Mounted Division meanwhile occupied Ramleh and Ludd. Between the now separated Seventh and Eighth Armies, a Turkish rearguard held the high ground about the village of Abu Shusheh, the site of the ancient Gezer of the Bible, which covers the entrance to the Vale of Ajalon, one of the principal passes into the Judæan Hills. The Yeomanry Division was ordered to dislodge this rearguard, and its 6th Brigade made another brilliant mounted attack over very difficult ground, which resulted in the capture of three hundred and fifty prisoners and the killing of four hundred Turks.

The losses of the Yeomanry were under fifty. On the 16th the Australian Mounted Division occupied Latron and the New Zealand Brigade entered Jaffa without opposition.

With the occupation of Jaffa and the withdrawal of the Eighth Turkish Army behind the line of the River Auja, and of the Seventh Army to the shelter of the Judæan Mountain Range, the pursuit up the Plain of Philistia came to an end.

In the ten days since the breaking of the Gaza—Beersheba line the British forces had advanced approximately fifty miles. Most of the cavalry had covered 170 miles between October 29th and November 14th. The 52nd Division had marched sixty-nine miles and fought four severe actions in nine days. The Turks had lost over 10,000 prisoners and 100 guns, but had avoided the complete annihilation that at one time seemed to threaten them. The stout fighting of their rearguards and the hard marching of their infantry would not, however, have availed to save them had not the lack of water so dispersed the pursuing mounted troops and restricted their rate of movement.\*

The battle casualties of the British forces during the period of the pursuit—November 7th to 16th—amounted to a little over six thousand.

## *2. The First Attempt on Jerusalem*

The British capture of Junction Station and subsequent advance to Ramleh and Jaffa had driven a wedge between the two Turkish armies and had complicated their supply problem. The Eighth Army was still based on the main railway, but the Seventh Army, in the hills about Jerusalem, was now dependent for its supplies on road transport, either from Nablus or from Amman, on the Hejaz Railway, distant respectively from forty and fifty miles from Jerusalem. There was no good lateral communication between the armies south of the Tul Keram—Nablus line. General Allenby had now to decide with which of the hostile armies he should first deal.

\* Some interesting details of the length of time horses were without water in the pursuit will be found on pp. 152–3 of the New Zealand official history, pp. 94–5 of Preston's "Desert Mounted Corps," and tabulated at length on pp. 208–9 of the "Veterinary History of the War."

His original intention had been to halt after clearing the coastal plain up to Jaffa, and not to turn into the difficult hill country until the development of his communications permitted his whole force to be maintained in the front line. But he now determined to take advantage of the enemy's disorganisation and to advance on Jerusalem at once. It was a bold decision. Already the supply services were strained to the utmost, and the winter rains, which were due to begin at any time now, would increase their difficulties, and might indeed cause a complete breakdown.\* The troops available had done much hard work. Accurate maps of the country toward Jerusalem were lacking. The history of previous campaigns in Palestine—closely studied by General Allenby—gave very plain warning of the fate which had befallen rash or ill-supported assaults on the strong western bulwarks of Judæa, from which Assyrian, Roman and Crusader had fallen back baffled. Adam Smith writes of this face of the Judæan fortress: "Everything conspires to give the few inhabitants easy means of defence against large armies. It is a country of ambushes, entanglements, surprises, where large armies have no room to fight and the defenders can remain hidden; where the essentials for war are nimbleness and the sure foot, the power of scramble and of rush."† The War Cabinet, mindful perhaps of the disaster which a forward policy had brought about in Mesopotamia two years earlier, had sent a telegram cautioning General Allenby against involving his army in commitments too extended for its strength, seeing that it might be found necessary next year to reduce the British forces in the East to a minimum.

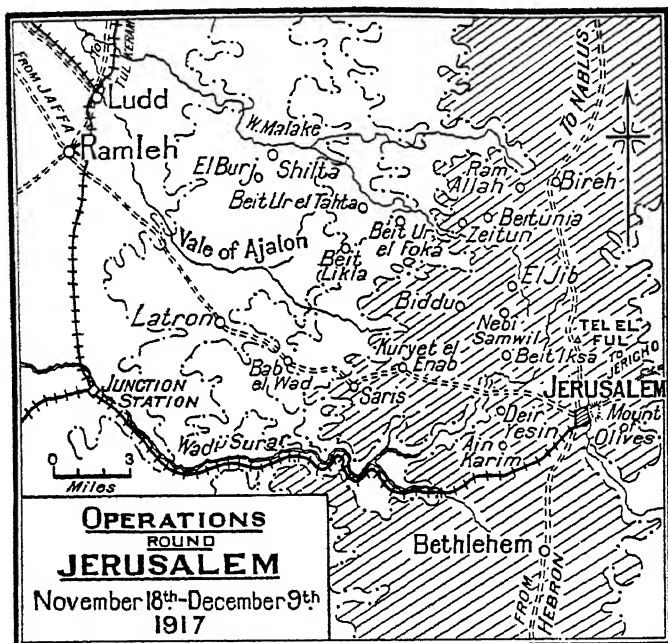
General Allenby weighed all these considerations against the obvious wisdom of continuing to press the opposing forces before they could recover from their demoralisation

\* The system of supply in the latter part of November was by lorry from Deir Sineid (railhead) to Junction Station. Other lorries distributed from Junction Station to the troops. Supplies landed at the mouth of Wadi Sukhereir went by camels to Ramleh, thence by lorries to Latron. The Turkish light railway from Deir Sineid to Junction Station could deliver little owing to lack of rolling stock. (See "History of the Transport Services of the E.E.F."—Badcock.)

† "Historical Geography of the Holy Land."

and organise a defence in those trackless hills. He determined to act at once. One day's interval was necessary to give the troops a breathing space and to re-allot the transport columns. November 17th was a day of halt. On the 18th operations were resumed.

The original orders directed that the XXI. Corps, with the Anzac Mounted Division and the Camel Brigade, should



MAP XIV.

take up a line in the plain, while the remaining two divisions of the Desert Mounted Corps advanced into the hills. So soon as the XXI. Corps was securely placed, the Anzacs and the Camel Brigade were to rejoin the Desert Mounted Corps, which was to be further supported by a division of the XX. Corps, when one could be brought up. These orders were soon modified, for the fighting round Latron on the 18th showed clearly that the forcing of the passes was a task for the infantry.

The plan now adopted was as follows. The establishment of a defensive line in the plain covering the main communications was entrusted to the Anzac Division and 54th Division, which had now come up from Gaza. The remainder of the XXI. Corps was to advance into the hills, the 75th Division astride the main Jaffa—Jerusalem road, and the 52nd Division on its left. On the left of the 52nd, the Yeomanry Mounted Division was directed by the Beth-horon route on Bireh, ten miles north of Jerusalem, on the Nablus Road. One brigade of the Australian Mounted Division was to work, on the right of the 75th, up the valley followed by the railway line. The remainder of the division was withdrawn to the coast to ease the strain on the communications. The general intention was that the 75th Division, on arriving within a certain distance of Jerusalem, should strike north-east on Bireh, and that the whole force, pivoting on the right, should swing across the main road from Nablus, thus cutting the communications of the Turks and compelling them to evacuate Jerusalem. No fighting was to take place within a six-mile radius of the Holy City.

On the 18th, while the Australian Division was manœuvring the Turks out of Latron, the Yeomanry Division made good progress towards Lower Beth-horon (Beit Ur el Tahta). The 75th Division assembled towards Latron, and the 52nd at Ramleh and Ludd. On the 19th the two infantry divisions plunged into the hills. Simultaneously winter set in, with heavy rain and a sudden fall in the temperature.

The main road, up which the advance of the 75th Division was directed, enters a defile a few miles east of Latron, through which it climbs steeply for four miles to a ridge on which stand the villages of Saris and Kuryet el Enab. The Turks had destroyed the road in several places. The routes taken by the 52nd Division and Yeomanry Division lay through the famous Vale of Ajalon, up and down which assaults on and sorties from the Judæan fortress have been many since the day when Joshua bade the sun stand still that he might complete his destruction of the Canaanites. These routes were marked on the map as Roman roads, but turned out to be mere goat tracks, quite impassable for wheels, and

even for camels, without improvement. The only means of portage between villages in these hills was by donkeys, and any path up which a donkey could scramble was described by the local native as a good road. The Yeomanry Division sent back all vehicles, including guns, on the 18th, and the leading brigade of the 52nd Division next day found it equally impossible to get wheels forward. The hill sides are steep and rocky, often precipitous, and the wadis which wind between them are strewn with great boulders.

On the 19th, the 75th Division, which comprised some battalions of Gurkhas and other Indian units with experience of warfare in the very similar circumstances of the North-West Frontier, battled its way to within a short distance of Saris, at the head of the Bab el Wad defile. The leading brigade of the 52nd Division reached Beit Likia, and the Yeomanry Beit Ur el Tahta. All the troops, in their thin cotton khaki, with no greatcoats and few blankets, suffered severely from the cold and wet, and there was great difficulty in getting the supply camels through the mud and over the rocks.

Next day, the 20th, was again cold and wet. The 75th Division encountered determined resistance on the ridges about Saris and Kuryet el Enab. Little artillery support could be given to the infantry, since the guns could not move off the road out of the defile. Saris was won during the afternoon, after difficult fighting, but the ridge behind, at Kuryet el Enab, was an even more formidable position. While the troops were deploying to assault it a providential veil of mist rolled down, sealing the eyes of the Turkish machine gunners as effectually as the most skilfully laid-down smoke screen could have done. Under its cover three battalions charged with the bayonet, and by 6 p.m. the 75th Division was in possession of the whole ridge, thus securing the passage of the main road through the defile. The 52nd Division also made some progress. The Yeomanry Division was engaged this day in a desperate but unavailing effort to reach the Nablus Road at Bireh. The key of the position here was the prominent Zeitun Ridge, on the eastern end of which lay the village of Beitunia, just west of Ram



Allah and Bireh. It was strongly held by a force of about 3,000 Turks, backed by several batteries, to which the Yeomanry could oppose only the four mountain guns of the Hong Kong and Singapore Battery. On such ground horses were merely an encumbrance that thinned the firing line and complicated the supply problem. Despite determined efforts, the Yeomanry, fighting on foot, could make no progress.

On the 21st, the 75th Division, having secured its right at Enab, started to move north-east on Bireh across the front of the 52nd Division. On arriving at Biddu it found the commanding height of Nebi Samwil to its right front, completely dominating the route to Bireh. The 234th Brigade attacked the hill and gained the summit just before midnight. This capture of Nebi Samwil—a most important point\*—proved the high-water mark of British progress towards Jerusalem in this first attempt. While the 75th Division was attacking it, the Yeomanry Division, quite outnumbered, was being driven off the Zeitun Ridge, on which it had very gallantly established itself that morning, down again to Beit Ur el Foka (Upper Beth-horon). From the 22nd to the 24th, the 75th and 52nd Divisions in turn attacked El Jib, on a height between Nebi Samwil and Beitunia, but could not take it, although the 52nd Division, by great exertions, had made a road from Beit Likia, which enabled some artillery to be brought up to Biddu. Meanwhile the Turks made three fierce counter-attacks on Nebi Samwil, which overlooked their Jerusalem defences, and even the city itself.†

On the 24th General Allenby issued orders for further attacks to be discontinued, and for the line gained to be consolidated. The enemy was too strongly posted to be dislodged until more artillery and fresh troops could be brought up. The 52nd and 75th Divisions had now been fighting and marching for three weeks, and were much reduced by casualties. The Yeomanry Division was in

\* The 75th Division subsequently took a key as their divisional badge, as token that they had captured the "Key to Jerusalem."

† It is the traditional site where Richard Cœur-de-Lion is said to have hidden his face and refused to look on the city he could not take.

similar straits. They had endured in these three weeks extremes of heat and cold and had often been on short rations. Though the attempt to take Jerusalem had failed, it had certainly not been made in vain and had fully justified its boldness. Had it been delayed, and had the enemy been given time to organise a defence in the lower passes, their subsequent capture would certainly have been slower and more costly.

Meanwhile the position in the coastal plain remained unchanged till November 24th, when the Anzac Division was ordered to secure a bridgehead over the River Auja, with the object of fixing the attention of the Eighth Army on their own front and preventing the withdrawal of troops to the Seventh Army. The New Zealand Mounted Brigade crossed the river by a ford at its mouth, and in a smart little action drove in the enemy outposts and enabled bridgeheads to be established at Kh. Hadrah and Sh. Muannis, which were occupied by two battalions of the 54th Division.\* The Turks, however, attacked in greatly superior numbers at dawn on the 25th, and soon drove the infantry across the river again. It was evident that more troops were needed before a position could be established north of the Auja.

### *3. The Capture of Jerusalem*

Now followed an interlude of a fortnight before the final attack on Jerusalem, while the XX. Corps was brought up, the divisions in the battle line reshuffled, and all other preparations, which included much road-making, completed. The new attack was entrusted to the XX. Corps, which was to relieve the XXI. Corps in the hills. The latter was eventually to take over from the Desert Mounted Corps the line in the plain in front of Ramleh and Jaffa. The 60th Division had marched north from Gaza on November 19th, and arrived at Latron on the 23rd. Between November 25th and 28th it relieved both 75th and 52nd Divisions. On the 28th the XX. Corps took over responsibility for the line in the hills. On the same date the 74th Division reached Latron, to be followed two days later by the 10th Division. The 53rd

\* See Map XV., p. 168.

Division, with the Corps Cavalry Regiment and a heavy battery attached, remained on the Hebron road north of Beersheba, and became "Mott's Detachment," directly under G.H.Q.

Meanwhile the enemy had taken advantage of the respite to initiate a series of counter-attacks on the British line, made by specially-selected "storm troops." The wisdom of such tactics, which were obviously German-inspired, was doubtful, but the situation of the British certainly invited reprisals. The Yeomanry Division, which could put barely a thousand tired men in the firing line, was spread over four miles of front. From its left, about Beit Ur el Tahta, was a gap of five miles to the right of the 54th Division at Shilta, and close behind this gap the main line of supply from Ludd lay exposed. The attacks began on the 27th, when the most advanced Yeomanry post at Zeitun, on the western end of the Beitunia Ridge, was assailed by greatly superior numbers. It put up a most gallant resistance against heavy odds and held off the enemy till the 28th, by which time the Yeomanry Division, hard pressed along its whole line, was compelled to withdraw not only from Zeitun, but from Beit Ur el Foka. The Turks had also penetrated into the gap between the Yeomanry and the 54th Division, annihilating a section of the Yeomanry's ammunition column and overwhelming the right-hand post of the 54th Division. Luckily reserves were at hand. The 7th Mounted Brigade and the Australian Mounted Division had been called up by forced marches, and a brigade of the 52nd Division was available. These closed the gap and drove the Turks off the communications. The battered Yeomanry Division was now relieved by the 74th.

On November 30th, during the relief, a small party of some eighty men of the 74th, steering by the inadequate map available, arrived in error at Beit Ur el Foka, in rear of the enemy line. Showing a bold front, they bluffed some 450 Turks into surrender, and actually brought 300 of them back into our lines.

On December 1st a storm battalion of the 19th Turkish Division made a most gallant and determined attack on a

post at El Burj, south of Shilta, held by the Australians. A battalion of the 52nd Division, on its way out to rest, came to the rescue. The whole Turkish battalion was accounted for, over 100 being killed and 172 taken prisoners, many of whom were wounded. The total disappearance of this battalion sorely puzzled the Turks—so it was afterwards learned from deserters. The British losses were under sixty. On the same day attacks on Beit Ur el Tahta and Nebi Samwil were repulsed, the Turks losing heavily. On December 2nd, the 10th Division relieved the 52nd Division, which withdrew to a well-earned rest. On December 3rd a battalion of the 74th Division recaptured Beit Ur el Foka, but found it impossible to hold, since it was commanded by higher ground, and it had to withdraw after suffering nearly 300 casualties. The fighting now died down. Three fresh divisions of the XX. Corps were in line in the hills, the Australian Mounted Division filled the gap between the left of the XX. Corps and right of the 54th Division, and the position was secure. Their counter-attacks had brought the Turks no gain and had cost them extremely heavy losses amongst the few really dependable troops they had remaining.

The date of the second attack on the Jerusalem defences had been fixed for December 8th. The first attempt, to pivot on the right and to swing the left across the Nablus road, had failed mainly owing to lack of roads in the country north-west of Jerusalem, which had deprived the infantry of adequate artillery support, whereas the Turks had the main Jerusalem—Nablus road behind their positions and could rapidly reinforce any threatened point. General Sir Philip Chetwode, commanding the XX. Corps, changed the line of attack. He determined to pivot on the left and to swing up his right past the western outskirts of Jerusalem across the Nablus road just north of Jerusalem. Thus the radius of the main attack would centre on the one good road in our possession and would enable the maximum of artillery support to be afforded. It was to be carried out by the 60th and 74th Divisions, while the 53rd Division, which had now reverted to the command of the XX. Corps, was to

send two brigades up the Hebron road towards Bethlehem to protect the right flank of the attack and by passing round the east of the city to sever its communications with Jericho.

During December 4th—7th the troops took up their positions for the attack. The 10th Division extended its right so as to enable the 74th Division to concentrate and relieve the 60th Division at Nebi Samwil, which was the principal pivot of the attack. The 60th Division assembled south of the Enab—Jerusalem road. It was to attack with its left flank on this road and its right flank just west of the Hebron road, in touch with the 53rd Division, which was to reach a position close up to the defences of Bethlehem by December 7th. The 10th A.L.H. Regiment \* and the Corps cavalry regiment (Worcestershire Yeomanry) were to keep touch between the 60th and 53rd. The attack was to be supported by the divisional artilleries, three mountain batteries (two with the 60th and one with the 74th Division), three batteries of 6-inch howitzers and one and a half batteries of 60-pdrs.

These arrangements were only made possible by the most strenuous exertions on the line of communications. The broad-gauge railway was due to reach El Medjel on December 8th. Meanwhile the captured Turkish line was used from Deir Sineid to Ramleh, but had only a very limited capacity. The mainstay of the supply system was camel and lorry columns. Heavy rains might at any time render the roads over the coastal plain impassable for both these forms of transport. Already the camels had suffered severely from the cold and wet, and the thinly-metalled Turkish road would obviously not last much longer. Two thousand donkeys from Egypt were brought up for work in the hills and did good service.†

On December 7th, the day preceding the attack, and during the night of the 7th/8th, rain fell incessantly. It hindered the march of the 53rd Division and caused great discomfort

\* This regiment had taken the place of the 5th Mounted Brigade on December 1st.

† Formation of a donkey corps had begun before the attack on Beer-sheba, with a view to its use in the country towards Jerusalem—a good instance of administrative foresight.

to all the troops. During the night, the 179th Brigade of the 60th Division plunged down into the valley of the Wadi Surar, and by 3.30 a.m. on the 8th had captured the high ground south of Ain Karim. The main attack began at dawn in driving rain and mist. The strength of the Turkish Seventh Army was estimated at 15,000 to 16,000. Their positions west of Jerusalem had been hewn out of the hill-side with great labour more than a year previously, and in places provided three tiers of fire. Stubbornly defended, they should have been almost impregnable, and the Turk at his normal fighting level would certainly have made the assault a perilous enterprise. But the succession of defeats had shaken the morale of the Seventh Army, and its best remaining troops had been expended in the fruitless counter-attacks of the previous ten days.

Though the enemy's resistance was less stout than usual, the difficulties of ground and weather were sufficient to make the advance slow and laborious. The 74th Division secured the ridge above Beit Ikse, but was then held up by enfilade fire from the lower slopes of Nebi Samwil. The 60th Division, on whom fell the brunt of the fighting, took Deir Yesin and other defences east of the Wadi Surar with their usual dash, but their right flank was exposed, since fog and rain had delayed the progress of the 53rd Division. In the afternoon, therefore, the further advance to the Nablus road was suspended and the troops were ordered to consolidate the positions won, and to continue the advance next day.

Actually, though they did not know it, they had already done enough to win Jerusalem. The Turks, seeing some of their strongest positions lost, gave up hope of defending the city. During the evening of the 8th and night of the 8th/9th they retreated, some sullenly, some in panic. By early morning the last Turkish soldier had left the city, and the four centuries of Ottoman domination over it were ended. The Mayor of Jerusalem came out and surrendered the keys to General Shea, commanding the 60th Division, soon after mid-day on the 9th.

The 53rd, 60th and 74th Divisions all advanced to their final objectives on the 9th and drew a complete cordon round

Jerusalem. The 60th Division was strongly opposed by a Turkish rearguard on the Mount of Olives, from which it was driven with the bayonet, leaving seventy dead. On December 11th, General Allenby made his formal entry into Jerusalem.

The British casualties from November 25th to December 10th were 1,667.\* In the same period 1,800 prisoners were taken. During the whole campaign, from Beersheba to Jerusalem, over 12,000 prisoners and 100 guns were taken. The total British casualties were approximately 18,000 and those of the Turks 25,000.

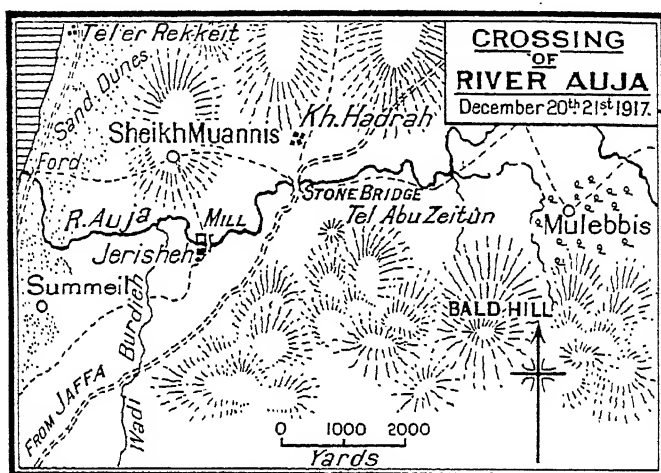
The capture of Jerusalem did not end the fighting ; the British force had still to carry out several minor operations before its positions in front of Jerusalem and Jaffa could be considered secure. But it was the climax of a most brilliant campaign, of which the results and main features may now be briefly summarised.

It had fully accomplished the objects for which it was planned. All danger to Baghdad and to the British conquest of Iraq was definitely and finally removed ; practically the last Turkish reserves of man power were drawn in ; and the British nation received the Christmas present that the Prime Minister had desired for it. The advance also gave a fresh impetus to the Arab revolt, a " running sore " that continued to drain much of Turkey's strength. Finally, though the occupation of Jerusalem itself had no special strategical importance, its moral significance was great. The recovery of its Holy Places had still power to stir Christianity ; and the loss of the city marked a further step in the degradation of Turkey, who had already been driven from two other Holy Places, Mecca and Baghdad. The boastful Yilderim plan had suffered utter collapse. In truth, Turkey was now in far worse plight than when Germany at the beginning of the year had undertaken the re-establishment of the power and prestige of the Ottoman Empire. For all his abilities,

\* The animal casualties from October 31st to December 31st, 1917, were 10,000 horses, camels, mules and donkeys (11·5 per cent. of the total), of which 50 per cent. were a dead loss.—(" Veterinary History of the War.")

Marshal Falkenhayn had quite failed to grasp the idiosyncrasies of his allies and the requirements of the theatre of war. He had been outmanœuvred by his opponent at every point.

The campaign embraced practically every form of war, over a great variety of terrain. Perhaps the outstanding lesson is the value of mobility. In a sustained pursuit mobility is dependent mainly on the personal will and determination of the Commander-in-Chief, which alone can



MAP XV

keep alive the impetus of the troops. The organisation of the communications from Gaza to Jerusalem is of great interest, almost every form of transport being used. The influence of the weather on operations was very marked; the heat and lack of water hampered the initial stages of the pursuit, while the final phase of the operations against Jerusalem was a struggle as much against the rainy season as against the foe.

#### 4. The Winter of 1917-18

The British force had now almost outrun its communications, and a period of consolidation and construction was



necessary. But before the troops settled down for the winter, it was essential to secure more elbow room in front of Jerusalem and Jaffa. The two Turkish armies were still separated by a roadless tract of country, impassable for wheels or guns without improvement, so that advances by the two wings of General Allenby's army could be carried out as independent operations.

The left wing moved first. The XXI. Corps had taken over the defence of the coastal plain from the Desert Mounted Corps on December 7th, and had put all three divisions into the line, the 75th on the right, 54th in the centre, and 52nd on the coast. The objective of its advance was to drive the enemy out of range of Jaffa, which was to be used as a port for the landing of supplies, and of the Jaffa—Ludd line, along which a light railway was being built.\*

The principal difficulty was the crossing of the River Auja, which enters the sea four miles north of Jaffa. Between Mulebbis and the sea it is about 40 to 50 feet wide and 10 to 12 feet deep, except at the mouth, where a bar forms a ford 40 yards wide and 3 to 4 feet deep. The banks are low and swampy, especially on the south. To the north lies a series of sandy ridges, from which two spurs run down to the river. The eastern of these overlooks a stone bridge at Hadrah, which had been partially destroyed; the western, on which stands the village of Sh. Muannis, ends near Jerisheh, where a mill dam bridged the stream. The Turks held both these spurs and a post opposite the ford, thus commanding the most practicable points of crossing. East of Hadrah their line crossed to the south bank and included Bald Hill and Mulebbis.

The original plan of the XXI. Corps was to make the crossing under cover of a heavy artillery bombardment, but General Hill, the commander of the 52nd Division, asked to be allowed to try the effect of surprise. Reconnaissance had shown that the Turkish patrolling of the banks was careless, except at the existing crossings, and it was hoped that covering parties could be ferried over and foot bridges

\* These operations, though brilliant in execution, hardly merit in size or importance the name "Battle of Jaffa," which has been accorded to them by the Battle Nomenclature Committee.

made before the enemy received warning. The necessary bridging material and rafts were brought down by night and were gradually collected in plantations near the water's edge at the selected points of passage, one between Hadrah and Jerisheh and the other between Jerisheh and the sea. The 155th Brigade was to cross at the former and attack the Turkish positions at Hadrah, the 156th Brigade was to cross at the latter and secure Sh. Muannis. The 157th Brigade was to send a battalion over the same crossing as the 156th Brigade; this battalion was to clear the enemy from in front of the ford, by which the remainder of the brigade was then to cross.

The operation was timed for the night of December 20th/21st. During the whole of the 19th and 20th rain fell, churning the approaches to the river into deep mud and swelling the stream to flood. Nevertheless the operation was carried out with complete success. The Turks, who did not regard a passage of the stream in such conditions of weather as possible elsewhere than at the existing crossings, were wholly surprised. By the morning of the 21st all three brigades were across and had secured the Turkish line overlooking the river. They captured over three hundred prisoners and killed many Turks with the bayonet, at a cost to themselves of only a hundred casualties. This brilliant operation was a fitting climax to the many achievements in Sinai and Palestine of this fine division, which was shortly to leave for France.

The 21st was spent in building bridges and passing over the artillery of the 52nd Division. During the night of the 21st/22nd the 54th Division drove the Turks from Bald Hill. On the 22nd both divisions moved forward. On the right the 54th expelled the enemy from Mulebbis and Rantieh, and the 52nd Division made an advance of five miles along the coast, moving forward their left as far as Arsuf. British warships assisted the operation. The enemy's line had now been pushed back to eight miles from Jaffa, making the harbour and intended railway secure.

The line Beitin (Bethel)—Nalin, which the XX. Corps had been ordered to reach, lay just north of one of the most

historic passages across the Judæan range from east to west, formed on the east by the gorge of Michmash, up which Israel first invaded the Promised Land, and on the west by the famous Vale of Ajalon with its three routes from the coastal plain to the central plateau. The line also marked one position of the ever-shifting frontier between the Kingdoms of Judah and Israel, between Judæa and Samaria. The advance was originally planned for December 24th. The 60th Division, advancing northwards astride the Jerusalem—Nablus road, and the 74th Division, advancing eastwards from Beth-horon (Beit Ur el Foka) were to converge on to the ridge on which stood Bireh—Ram Allah, and were then to continue northwards in line. Meanwhile the 53rd Division on the right and the 10th Division on the left were to protect and extend the flanks.

The operation was postponed to the 27th owing to the weather. Meanwhile a Turkish wireless message was intercepted and deciphered which gave details of an intended counter attack on Jerusalem from the north and east. Fresh troops, including the 1st Division, had arrived, and the Turks had determined on an effort to recover the city. It was decided that the 53rd and 60th Divisions should stand fast in front of Jerusalem, while the left wing of the Corps, 74th and 10th Divisions, should advance as already planned. The Turkish attack began on the night of the 26th/27th, and was continued up till the afternoon of the 27th. It centred on a prominent hill just east of the Nablus road, about three miles north of Jerusalem, Tel el Ful. The Turks delivered a number of assaults with the utmost gallantry and determination, but with little skill. On the front of the 53rd Division a company of the Middlesex held out for many hours, though surrounded, and beat off all attacks. Nowhere did the Turks gain any ground.

Meanwhile the 74th and 10th Divisions had attacked early on the 27th. The 74th Division clambered up the Zeitun ridge, which the Yeomanry Mounted Division had reached but failed to secure in the first attack on Jerusalem, and advanced along it towards Beitunia. The 10th Division on its left reached Deir Izbia. These two divisions advanced

4,000 yards on a six-mile front, and effectually halted the Turkish attack on Jerusalem. Next day, December 28th, seeing that the enemy's effort was spent, the XX. Corps began a general advance. The 60th Division took El Jib, Er Ram and Rafat, while the 53rd Division pushed forward its left to conform with this movement. The 74th Division took Beitunia, and the 10th Division progressed to the east of Ain Arik. The fighting was severe, for the enemy put up a stubborn resistance, and their machine guns in particular were hard to locate amongst the boulders of these stony hills. On the 29th and 30th the advance was continued to the final objectives. Hostile resistance was less determined on the 29th, and had practically collapsed on the 30th. The enemy's losses in the abortive attempt to recover Jerusalem were undoubtedly very heavy. Over a thousand Turks were buried and 550 prisoners were taken.

The line was now secure along the whole front. Further advance was impossible till the communications had been improved. During the latter half of December the rains had been very heavy, culminating in a tremendous storm on Christmas Day. Many parts of the plain had become a morass over which no transport of any kind could move, and the railway line had been washed out in places. A pause was essential until railway and road construction had progressed and depots of supplies and ammunition had been accumulated. With the end of the year came a lull in active operations, and the troops settled down to such comfort as they could procure in the bleak hills or on the sodden plains.

# INTERVAL

## CHAPTER VI

### THE SPRING AND SUMMER OF 1918

Strategical situation at beginning of 1918—Capture of Jericho—Advance to the line of the two Aujas—First raid east of Jordan—Despatch of troops to France—Second raid east of Jordan—Reorganisation of E.E.F.—Fighting in summer of 1918.

(*SEE MAPS XVI., XVII.*)

THE objectives of the campaign that culminated in the capture of Jerusalem had been to frustrate the Turko-German expedition against Baghdad, to engage Turkey's last reserves of men, and to invigorate the nation's resolution at a time when the apparently unbreakable deadlock in the main theatre was tending to discouragement. All these purposes had been accomplished before the end of 1917.

But the President of the War Cabinet, Mr. Lloyd George, had always had in view a further and more ambitious aim, the complete elimination of Turkey from the war. Immediately after the fall of Jerusalem General Allenby was asked for his proposals for a further advance, and was informed that it was the aim of the Cabinet to force Turkey out of the war at the earliest possible moment. General Allenby made it quite clear that an immediate resumption of the advance was out of the question; that there must be a period of recuperation and reorganisation, while the broad-gauge railway was being brought up to his present line; that it might require a very large addition to his present force to secure a distant objective, such as Aleppo, and that in any case his future rate of progress could hardly exceed the rate at which the broad-gauge railway could be constructed.

Mr. Lloyd George, who could only with difficulty be convinced of the limitations of military movement by questions of transport and supply, was firmly persuaded that the surest and shortest road to victory lay in the subjection of Germany's weaker allies. He remained set on his purpose of dealing a death-blow to Turkey as the principal effort for the spring of 1918, and sent out General Smuts to discuss with General Allenby the strategical problem of an advance to Damascus and Aleppo and the requirements of the force for this advance. The 7th Indian Division from Mesopotamia was put under orders for Palestine.

Since this question of the future of the Palestine campaign in 1918 was a subject of acute controversy between the so-called "Westerners" and "Easterners," it will be useful to examine here the main arguments put forward on either side, bearing in mind the principal factors of the general strategical situation at the beginning of 1918. The complete collapse of Russia, who had made an armistice and was preparing to negotiate for a separate peace, had freed sufficient German forces to give Germany a preponderance in the Western theatre, and to allow her a last gambler's throw for victory before American troops could arrive in sufficient numbers to turn the scales again. America had entered the war in April, 1917, but her forces were only just beginning to land in Europe and could hardly become a serious factor before the middle of the summer.\*

Those who opposed any further adventure in Palestine argued somewhat as follows: The safety of the Western front was vital, a defeat here might mean the loss of the war. It would be madness to risk disaster at this last hour for the sake of an advance in a part of the battle line where even the most crushing victory could have little immediate effect. Damascus, even Aleppo, still lay hundreds of miles from the real heart of Turkey. Their occupation would not force her from the war, if she saw her German ally overrunning France. One of the chief advantages to be gained by crushing

\* The estimate at this time was that twelve divisions would be available by the summer of 1918 and twelve more by the end of the year. Actually, such efforts to speed up the rate of arrival were made that twenty-five divisions reached France by July, 1918.

Turkey—free passage through the Dardanelles to Russia—was lost now that Russia had ceased to count in the war. Moreover, this Palestine campaign was wasteful of shipping, since all reinforcements and supplies had to pass through the most dangerous submarine zone, the Mediterranean. Ships to transport the Americans to Europe were now the chief need of the Allies, and the losses by submarine their chief anxiety. Let Turkey lie and bleed to death harmlessly, while every available man and all possible resources were concentrated in the West to buttress the front against the impending German blow. Palestine could spare at least two white divisions if a defensive attitude were adopted, and much material, shipping and treasure would be economised by restricting our commitments in this theatre.

So argued the Westerners. The reply of the Easterners was to the following general effect. They agreed that it was essential to maintain the Western Front unbroken, but considered that the forces in France and Belgium were already sufficient for this purpose, and that to surrender the initiative everywhere and to concentrate on a policy of purely passive defence along the whole battle line—even if only temporarily—was a counsel of despair. They pointed out that the Allies had failed to break the German line in the West in spite of two years of attack with a much greater superiority in numbers and material than the Germans would enjoy in the spring of 1918, and that the German superiority in numbers would only last for a short time, till the Americans restored the balance. With a proper disposition of the Allied forces already available in the West there should be no difficulty in keeping the front intact. The Palestine theatre might be wasteful of shipping, but the Western theatre was wasteful of lives. We could no longer afford to give blank cheques on our reserves of manpower for use in fighting by which neither side could advance more than a few miles. It would be folly to take seasoned troops from a theatre where decisive success could still be won and to throw them into a theatre where the opposing fronts were merely millstones between which the combatants were ground to blood. Turkey was tottering, and one more

blow would bring her surrender. This would lead to the defection of Bulgaria, already sick of the war, and would open a path to Austria and Germany.\* Let Germany beat out her brains against the iron fence in the West while we administered the finishing blow to Turkey in the spring of 1918.

Such in outline were the rival views on this question. It will be observed that the real conflict of opinion was on the impregnability or otherwise of the Allied line in the West. If the Turks were to see the last effort of Germany definitely held, they would no doubt accept terms as soon as they suffered a fresh defeat. But should their German allies be at or near the gates of Paris, neither the occupation of Damascus nor of Aleppo would be likely to compel their surrender.

General Smuts went to Palestine early in February with the Cabinet's proposals, and discussed with General Allenby the possibilities of a further advance. The intention was to reinforce the E.E.F. with three divisions from Mesopotamia, one, and possibly a second, Indian cavalry division from France, together with some additional heavy artillery and aeroplanes. General Allenby's plan was, firstly, to secure his right flank by the occupation of the Jordan Valley and to demolish the Hejaz Railway about Amman, so as to isolate the Turkish forces about Medina and encourage the Arab movement. Then as the dry season approached he intended to advance to the Plain of Esdrælon and secure a line from Tiberias to Haifa. The broad-gauge railway was to follow this movement as rapidly as possible to Haifa. Thereafter the main column was to proceed along the coast by Tyre and Sidon to Beirut, accompanied by the railway. The right flank of this force would be protected by the mountains and by a friendly population. The flank of any Turkish force which stood to defend Damascus could be turned by the Tripoli—Homs gap. Subsidiary columns would work up the Yarmuk Valley towards the Hauran,

\* This policy was sometimes termed "knocking out the props"—a mistaken phrase, for Turkey, Bulgaria and Austria were in no sense "props" of Germany. "Lopping off the limbs" would have been nearer the mark, but would not have sounded so impressive.



and north of Lake Tiberias along the direct road to Damascus.

The speed at which this advance could be made depended mainly on the rate at which the railway could be constructed, and special measures were proposed to enable a rapid rate to be maintained. Battalions of Canadian railwaymen and much material and labour were to be sent.

The Supreme War Council met at Versailles in February and passed a plan of campaign for the early part of 1918—to stand on the defensive in the West and to deal Turkey a knock-out blow in Palestine. The French made a proviso that no white troops should be taken from France for the Palestine campaign. The proposals brought home by General Smuts were approved generally by the British War Cabinet, with some modifications in detail, of which the principal was that only two Indian divisions, the 3rd and 7th, would be sent from Mesopotamia instead of three. By the middle of March active preparations for the forthcoming offensive were in progress.

Meantime General Allenby had made the first move in his programme. The occupation of the Jordan Valley, besides securing his right flank, was a necessary preliminary to any expedition against the Hejaz Railway. It would also deprive the Turks of the supplies they drew by boat across the Dead Sea from the grain-bearing districts about Kerak. The general plan was for the 60th Division, which had changed places with the 53rd Division east of Jerusalem, to advance directly down on Jericho, while the Anzac Mounted Division, placed under the XX. Corps for the operation, was to turn the enemy's left, entering the Jordan Valley near Nebi Musa, and to interpose between him and Jericho.

The operations began on February 19th. They need little description. The eastern flank of the Judæan Range tumbles down headlong to the valley in a tangled mass of stony ridges and deep, narrow gorges. Rapid movement against opposition is impossible. The enemy, with his numerous machine guns, was able to render the progress of the 60th Division very difficult and gradual, and to check

the turning movement of the Anzacs till the night of the 20th/21st, during which he withdrew across the Jordan, leaving a bridgehead on the west bank, at Ghoraniyeh. The occupation of Jericho on the morning of the 21st ended these operations, no attempt being made for the present to force the crossings of the Jordan. The casualties were 510.

The capture of Jericho had effectually removed any threat to Jerusalem from the east. But before the Jordan Valley could be used as a base of operations against the Hejaz Railway it was necessary to drive the enemy further northwards, both in the valley itself and on the Judæan Fange above, so as to gain control of as many as possible of the routes into the Jordan Valley and to make it difficult for the Turks to assemble troops rapidly against the flank of a raid towards Amman. Opportunity was also taken to improve the position held in the mountains by a general advancement of the line up to the physical boundary which separates the harsh and rugged mass of Judæa from the more rounded and fertile hills of Samaria. Accordingly both XX. and XXI. Corps were to advance. On the right of the XX. Corps, the 60th Division, in the Jordan Valley, was to drive the enemy north of the Auja and to occupy the high ground about Abu Tellul and Musallabeh, which secured the water supply of the River Auja and commanded the Beisan—Jericho road, one of the principal routes into the valley from the north. Further west, the 53rd, 74th and 10th Divisions were to advance on both sides of the Nablus road to the line Kefr Malik—Sinjil—the ridge north of the Wadi el Jib—Nebi Saleh. The XXI. Corps was to conform by pushing forward its right to the line Wadi Deir Ballut—Medjel Yaba—Ras el Ain.

General Liman von Sanders had succeeded von Falkenhayn in command of the Turkish armies in Palestine on March 1st. He had been head of the German military mission in Turkey for over three years, so was at least experienced in the methods of the Turk. His first step was to replace the purely German staff with which von Falkenhayn had worked by a staff principally Turkish. He at once recalled part of the Seventh Army from east of the

Jordan to reinforce the troops on the Beisan—Jericho and Nablus—Jerusalem roads—a timely move.

The attack of the XX. and XXI. Corps led to four days' stiff fighting (March 9th–12th), at the end of which they had reached all their objectives.\* The operations showed, however, how impossible it was to make a rapid advance in these hills. Their slopes were steeply terraced, making ascent to or descent from a ridge often practicable only at one or two points. Artillery was practically confined to the main road. The machine guns of the defenders were often concealed in caves, and were always extremely hard to locate.

The stage was now clear for the raid to Amman, one of the principal objects of which was to assist the operations of the Emir Feisal's Arabs. Since the capture of Akaba (see p. 56) Feisal, with Lawrence as his lieutenant and adviser, had gradually spread his influence northwards, and had enlisted the tribes east and south-east of the Dead Sea to his cause. His tactics were a series of continual raids on the Turkish trains and on their posts along the railway. The mobility of the raiding forces and their complete independence of communications enabled them constantly to surprise the enemy, to wreck a train or capture a post, and then to disappear into the desert before the Turk could collect for a counter-stroke or find a target to aim it at. Only once did Lawrence allow his Arabs to become committed to a pitched battle. On January 16th a force of tribesmen seized Tafle, fifteen miles south-east of the Dead Sea. On January 26th a Turkish force, with mountain guns and machine guns, which had advanced to recapture the place, suffered almost complete annihilation at the hands of a force under Lawrence.† In March the Turks collected a considerable column, which included a German battalion, and reoccupied Tafle.

The activities of Feisal's Arabs were of great value to the

\* Liman von Sanders, in his book "Fünfe Jahre im Turkei," gives himself great credit for stopping an advance to Nablus. No such thing was of course intended.

† An account by Lawrence of this engagement was published in the *Army Quarterly* for April, 1921, and is very well worth reading. It is one of the best descriptions of a battle ever penned.

E.E.F. They safeguarded its flank south of the Dead Sea from Turkish raids towards Beersheba or Hebron, deprived the Turks of the supplies they had been drawing from the areas about Kerak and Maan, and caused a constant drain of men and material on their scanty reserves. General Allenby was therefore anxious to afford Feisal such support as lay in his power, and intended by his advance to force the recall of the Tafil expedition. He also hoped, by the destruction of the tunnel and viaduct near Amman, to isolate the Turks south of that place for some considerable time, and thus to further Feisal's operations round Maan. But he had a deeper motive for his move east of the Jordan than these immediate advantages. Few leaders have looked as far ahead as General Allenby always did in his strategical combinations. He had, some time since, made up his mind that the main effort of his next big advance must be made along the coastal plain, where rapid progress was possible and where his mounted troops would have full scope. Therefore the more Turkish troops he could draw to the east of the Jordan, the weaker would be their line at the place where he intended to strike. The railway junction at Deraa was a vital point for the enemy; if he could be induced to believe that an attack on it by way of Amman was seriously intended, he must strengthen his defence east of the Jordan and correspondingly weaken it on the west.

The operations, which lasted from March 21st to April 2nd, were hampered throughout by the weather. The troops employed were the 60th Division, the Anzac Mounted Division, and the Imperial Camel Brigade, the whole under the commander of the 60th Division, General Shea. Heavy rains had swollen the Jordan, and much time was lost in overcoming the difficulties and forcing a crossing.\* It was not till the 23rd that the main body was across. This initial delay was fatal to the project.

The Mountains of Moab are steep and rocky. The Turks had made an indifferent metalled road from the Ghoraniyeh Bridge, through the Shunet Nimrin defile, up to Es Salt, and thence to Amman. Elsewhere a few narrow tracks led

\* "How wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?" (Jeremiah xii. 5).

up to the plateau. The plan was for the 60th Division, with a mounted brigade on its left, to drive the Turks from Shunet Nimrin and move up the main road on Es Salt. The remaining two brigades of the Anzacs and the Camel Brigade were to climb to the plateau by tracks further south and to move direct on Amman. The infantry and the 1st A.L.H. Brigade, having gained Es Salt, were to remain there in support of the assault on Amman by the remainder of the force (N.Z. Mounted Brigade, 2nd A.L.H. Brigade, and Camel Brigade).

On the morning of the 24th the 60th Division attacked the Turkish position at Shunet Nimrin, the dominating feature of which was the hill of El Haud. After a stiff little fight they captured the position, taking three guns, and before nightfall had advanced some distance up the road to Es Salt.

Meanwhile the mounted troops were scrambling up the hillside by two difficult tracks. It was found impossible to take wheels, and much delay was caused by shifting the loads of ammunition and explosives on to camels. The advance continued during the night of the 24th/25th. Heavy rain began to fall, and was almost continuous during the remainder of the operations. The troops had to move in single file, and the men of the Camel Brigade only succeeded by dint of tremendous exertions in getting their camels up the slippery rocks. Most of the 25th was spent in closing up the column.\* On the evening of this day Es Salt was occupied by troops of the 1st A.L.H. Brigade, followed at midnight by a brigade of the 60th Division.

After another night march in wet and cold, over bog and rock, the mounted troops were assembled about Ain es Sir on the early morning of the 26th, six miles west of Amman. An attack on Amman was ordered for this day, but was postponed to the 27th owing to the exhaustion of men and horses. Two battalions of the 181st Brigade started from Es Salt at dawn on the 27th to assist the

\* It took twenty-four hours to cover the first sixteen miles from the Jordan. The head of the column reached the plateau at 2 a.m., but the last camel did not arrive till 7.30 p.m. on the 25th.

mounted troops in their attack, but were delayed about Suweileh by a local war between Circassians and Arabs.

The delay in crossing the Jordan had given the Turkish command full and timely warning of the advance on Amman. The garrison had been reinforced from north and south up to a total of some 5,000 rifles and fifteen guns, and was strongly posted. For four days, from March 27th to 30th, the Anzacs, Camel Brigade, and 181st Brigade strove with desperate gallantry to capture Amman. But conditions were too adverse. The attacks had the support of only three mountain batteries (on the last day a R.H.A. battery also was moved up with great difficulty from Es Salt), the ground was very intricate, and the weather atrocious. The Anzacs broke the railway north and south of Amman, but could not storm the positions covering the tunnel and viaduct.

The withdrawal began on the night of March 30th/31st. Meanwhile a Turkish force that had crossed the Jordan at Jisr ed Damieh was attacking Es Salt from the north, and had to be held at bay. The Jordan had risen nine feet and had swept away several bridges, causing great difficulties in the supply of the columns. But the withdrawal was carried out with order and was not seriously pressed by the enemy. By the evening of April 2nd the whole force was back across the Jordan, except the troops detailed to hold a bridgehead on the east bank at Ghoraniyeh. A thousand prisoners were brought back. Our total losses were 1,350.

The operation had been designed as a swift raid by mounted troops. The vile weather and the difficulties of the terrain, which was even more unfavourable than had been expected, removed all possibility of rapid movement and surprise. In the circumstances complete success could not be achieved. But the move had fulfilled at least a part of its purposes. The Turkish expedition to Tafileh had been promptly recalled and a part of the Maan garrison had been moved north, thus facilitating the operations of Feisal's Arabs. And the Turks, thoroughly alarmed for the safety of their communications east of the Jordan, had been compelled to make a permanent increase to their forces in this area.

On the same day that the raid east of Jordan began the Germans launched their great offensive in France. While Shea's Force was scrambling through the Hills of Moab and battering at the Turkish positions round Amman the British line in Picardy had been breached, and was reeling backwards on Amiens. The last great crisis of the war had come, and the War Cabinet at once recognised that the intended overthrow of Turkey must at least be postponed for a time. On March 27th General Allenby was warned that a defensive attitude must be adopted in Palestine, since all troops that could be spared would be required for France.

During the first half of April two complete divisions, the 52nd and 74th, embarked for the Western Front. Nine Yeomanry regiments, five and a half siege batteries, nine British battalions, and five machine-gun companies were also withdrawn from the front for embarkation. Fourteen more British battalions were sent in May. The two divisions were replaced by those already ordered from Mesopotamia, of which the 7th Indian had arrived in Egypt, and the 3rd Indian was on its way. To replace the Yeomanry, Indian cavalry units came from France, and were available by the end of April. But the twenty-four British battalions—all well-trying units—were only replaced very gradually by Indian battalions from India with no war experience, and often with very inadequate training. A period of reorganisation was consequently necessary before the E.E.F. could undertake a large-scale offensive.

General Allenby was not the man, however, to take up an attitude of purely passive defence. An operation, planned some time previously, for the advancement of the right of the XXI. Corps in the foothills of Judæa was allowed to proceed. It was not as successful as had been hoped. Three days' fighting, from April 9th to 11th, brought only small gains of ground, while the losses were not light. The operation proved once again that in these rough hills machine guns could make any advance slow and expensive. Moreover, the plan of the whole attack was disclosed to the enemy on the first day by the capture of a copy of an

important order from the body of an officer who had improperly taken it into battle.

General Allenby wished still further to imbue the minds of his adversaries with the idea that he was aiming at the railway junction at Deraa. He therefore planned a second advance on the east of the Jordan. After the Amman raid the Turks had made one effort to hinder its repetition and to circumscribe our holding in the Jordan Valley. On April 11th they made violent attacks on the Ghoraniyeh Bridgehead and on the El Musallabeh position, north of the Auja. These were defeated with heavy loss. They then withdrew to Shunet Nimrin and fortified a strong position there.

General Allenby's plan was to seize Es Salt with his mounted troops, thus cutting the main communications of the force at Nimrin, which would be attacked in front by infantry and might, he hoped, be captured or dispersed. It might then be practicable, with the help of the Arabs, to hold Es Salt and the adjacent country permanently, and so spare our troops the ordeal of a summer in the Jordan Valley.\* The operation was to take place about the middle of May, when the reorganisation of the mounted troops consequent on the departure of the Yeomanry and the arrival of Indian units would be complete.

The desire to co-operate with the Arabs, however, forced General Allenby's hand prematurely. Towards the end of April a deputation arrived from the Beni Sakhr tribe to say that their fighting men were assembled about Madeba, some twenty miles south of Es Salt, ready to concert their action with the British movements, but that their stock of supplies did not permit them to wait later than May 4th. General Allenby had had no experience of the instability of the Arabs, nor of their inaptitude for regular warfare and prolonged operations. Their offer fitted in so well with the plan he was maturing that it seemed worth while to hasten on the date in order to secure their assistance. The previous raid had shown that the main road to Es Salt was the only

\* The official military handbook of Palestine said of the Jordan Valley : " Nothing is known of the climate in summer time, since no civilised human being has yet been found to spend summer there."



route from Nimrin fit for wheels, the direct track to Amman by Ain Sir being fit for pack transport only with difficulty. If, while our mounted troops seized Es Salt, the Beni Sakhr, coming up from the south, barred the Ain Sir track, which they professed themselves well able to do, the Turkish force at Nimrin would be completely isolated and might be destroyed.

The troops available for the raid were the Anzac and Australian Mounted Divisions, the 60th Division, and Imperial Service Cavalry and Infantry Brigades. This whole force was placed under General Chauvel, commander of the Desert Mounted Corps.

North of Shunet Nimrin, where the main road leaves the valley, three tracks run from the Jordan to Es Salt. The Wadi Arseniyat track\* runs close to El Haud, which was included in the Turkish position at Nimrin. This route was not, therefore, available. Some six or seven miles north of the Ghoraniyeh Bridge is the Um esh Shert Ford, whence a track ran direct to Es Salt. Nine miles further north is the Jisr ed Damieh bridge, and the third track, by which the Turks from west of Jordan had advanced against our covering forces at Es Salt during the Amman raid. It was determined to prevent a repetition of this ploy by seizing the Jisr ed Damieh bridge or at least placing a force astride the track.

The attacking force assembled on the Jordan on the night of April 29th. Operations began at dawn next day. Two brigades of the 60th Division, with the New Zealand Mounted Brigade on their right, made a direct assault on the Nimrin position, held by the Turkish VIII. Corps. They won the enemy's advanced line at the first rush, but the second-line works were formidable and were strongly manned. No further progress was possible.

Meanwhile the Australian Division moved fast up the valley, which is from three to five miles wide between the foot of the mountains and the mud hills that fringe the Jordan. The 4th A.L.H. Brigade led the advance, and arrived at Jisr ed Damieh by 5.30 a.m. The Turks were

\* Called "Wadi Abu Turra" in the Official History.

too strongly posted for the bridge itself to be captured, so the brigade, with three R.H.A. batteries attached, took up a position facing west astride the Es Salt track. The brigade was extended over eight miles, from the Nahr ez Zerka on the north towards Red Hill on the south, a prominent feature close to the Jordan, a few miles north of the Um esh Shert track. This hill, which was destined to play an important part in the battle, was held by a squadron detached from the Anzac Division.

While the 4th Brigade was thus preparing to block the main route by which the Turks could move reinforcements from west to east of Jordan, the 3rd A.L.H. Brigade, which had followed it to Ed Damieh, turned up the track to Es Salt. The remaining brigade of the Australian Division, the 5th Mounted Brigade, had taken the Um esh Shert route. The 1st and 2nd A.L.H. Brigades of the Anzac Division (temporarily under the command of Australian Division Headquarters) followed the 5th Mounted Brigade later in the day.

The 3rd A.L.H. Brigade achieved the one tactical success of the whole operation by capturing Es Salt that evening—a very dashing and skilful exploit. The 5th Mounted Brigade was overtaken by night close to Es Salt with the 1st and 2nd A.L.H. Brigades behind it on the same track. Next morning, May 1st, the three Light Horse brigades made a defensive cordon round Es Salt, the 2nd on the east towards Amman, the 3rd on the north and north-west and the 1st along the Um esh Shert track on the west. The 5th Mounted Brigade was directed down the main road to come in on the rear of the Nimrin position, which was again being assailed by the infantry.

But on this morning of May 1st disaster overtook the 4th A.L.H. Brigade in the valley. The Turks had been prompt to assemble against this detachment a force consisting of the 24th Division and 3rd Cavalry Division. Unknown to our Intelligence, the enemy had made a pontoon bridge at Mafid Jozele, between Jisr ed Damieh and Um esh Shert, a little north of Red Hill. The existence of this bridge was not realised till the evening of the 30th. Grant, commanding

the 4th Brigade, found his extended line suddenly, at about 7 a.m., attacked from three directions. A force from the Nahr ez Zerka attempted to envelop his right flank, another from Jisr ed Damieh attacked his centre, and a third body, which had crossed by the pontoon bridge, advanced against Red Hill and into the gap between Red Hill and his left.

The brigade was soon driven off the Ed Damieh—Es Salt track and gradually forced back against the hills, practically impassable to mounted men. Red Hill was lost, and soon only a narrow avenue was left through which the brigade might hope to disengage to the south and take up a fresh position to cover the Um esh Shert track, the only line of communication now open to the force at Es Salt. The brigade managed to disentangle itself and to avoid being penned against the hills, but at some cost. Nine of the twelve guns with the brigade were lost, and the situation remained critical for some time. Eventually, with the help of two regiments of Yeomanry and a New Zealand regiment hurried up from the south, a line was established about a mile north of the Um esh Shert track, and the Turkish advance was stayed before it could completely isolate our cavalry force at Es Salt.

At Nimrin there was little change in the position this day. The assaults of the Londoners, made with the utmost gallantry against very strong positions, failed, and the 5th Mounted Brigade were held up in the difficult hills when barely half-way down the road from Es Salt. The Beni Sakhr had failed to keep their promise of barring the Ain Sir track. In fact, they took no part of any kind in the fighting. The Turks had, it was afterwards found, much improved the track since the Amman raid, and were thus able to receive reinforcements and supplies from Amman even though the main road was cut.

During May 2nd and 3rd General Chauvel's troops still strove desperately for success. But the position at Nimrin was too strong for the Londoners to force, and the hills between Nimrin and Es Salt were too intricate for the Yeomanry to pass in the face of strenuous opposition. And now the position of the brigades at Es Salt had become perilous.

They were being continuously attacked on the east from Amman and on the north and west from Jisr ed Damieh. Only one convoy—of much-needed ammunition—had reached them since their occupation of Es Salt. Their corridor of retreat to the valley was very narrow, and was only being kept open by hard fighting. On the afternoon of the 3rd General Allenby gave orders for their recall from Es Salt.

During the night of the 3rd/4th they broke off the battle and tumbled down the Um esh Shert track to the valley with little interference from the enemy, who had been discouraged by the constant repulse of his attacks from pressing in too close. By the evening of the 4th the whole force had passed through the bridgehead at Ghoraniyeh and had recrossed the Jordan.

The losses were not unduly heavy, about 500 in the mounted divisions and 1,100 in the infantry. Close on a thousand prisoners were brought away, and the enemy casualties must have been severe. Though the raid ended in a distinct tactical defeat, the strategical effect was favourable in that from now onward one-third of the total Turkish forces was stationed east of the Jordan.

General Allenby kept alive the enemy's fears for this flank by maintaining a force of cavalry in the Jordan Valley throughout the summer, in spite of the terrible heat. Probably no collection of civilised people had ever endured a full summer in this horrible valley before. The daily temperature was over 100°, hot winds drove the powdery dust—a foot deep in many parts—in choking clouds up and down the valley, and the atmosphere at 1,200 feet below sea-level was peculiarly oppressive. Only the most strenuous efforts of the medical staff kept at bay the virulent type of malaria which usually ravages the inhabitants of the valley. Moreover, the camps and horse-lines were subjected to continual shelling from long-range guns, to which there was no reply and from which there was little shelter on the bare and exposed flats. Of the four cavalry divisions which composed the Desert Mounted Corps on reorganisation (see p. 189), two were normally in the valley and two recuperating in the hills, reliefs taking place every month. The ordeal was

severe, but our endurance of it confirmed the enemy in his belief that the next advance would again come against his left.

Consequent on the departure of troops for France and the arrival of Indian units to replace them, considerable changes of organisation were made.

In the Desert Mounted Corps the Yeomanry Division, the 5th Mounted Brigade and the Imperial Camel Corps Brigade were broken up. The Yeomanry regiments still remaining were combined with Indian units to form the 4th and 5th Cavalry Divisions, under Major-General Barrow and Major-General MacAndrew respectively. The Imperial Service Cavalry Brigade was incorporated into the 5th Division as the 15th (Imperial Service) Brigade. From the Australian battalions of the Camel Corps was formed the 5th A.L.H. Brigade\* which replaced the 5th Mounted Brigade in the Australian Division.† The Desert Mounted Corps now consisted of two cavalry divisions and two mounted divisions. During the summer the Australian Mounted Division adopted the sword, thus assimilating their tactics to those of the Cavalry Divisions. The Anzac Division elected to remain Mounted Rifles to the end.

Of the infantry, the 54th Division was the only one to retain a purely British composition.‡ The other British divisions remaining in the E.E.F., *i.e.*, 10th, 53rd, 60th, 75th, were converted into divisions on the Indian model, with three British battalions and nine Indian. Of the British battalions which thus became surplus, twenty-four had already been despatched to France; ten others were broken up for use as reinforcements to the battalions retained. The Indian battalions which took their places were formed in various ways and were of somewhat varying quality. Twenty came from India, of which half were units existing before the war and half had been raised during the war. Thirteen others

\* Formed of the 14th and 15th A.L.H. Regiments and a French Colonial regiment of Spahis and Chasseurs d'Afrique.

† A proposal to break up the Australian Mounted Division to provide infantry drafts for France was made in June, but subsequently withdrawn.

‡ A proposal to take the 54th Division to France was made in June, but subsequently withdrawn.

were formed in Palestine by the process of withdrawing companies from existing battalions.

Much work was required to weld into an effective whole a force which had suffered so drastic a transformation. The training of specialists, such as signallers, Lewis gunners and transport drivers, of whom the new Indian battalions had very few, required intensive effort during the summer. The results achieved in spite of all difficulties were quite remarkable.

Our activities during the four months from the middle of May to the middle of September were confined to raids undertaken to train the new Indian troops and to one minor advance to secure observation. This last was on the extreme left, at Arsuf, where a most successful little operation was carried out on June 9th by two battalions of the 7th Indian Division.

The most important of the many raids was made by a brigade of the 10th Division on the night of August 12th/13th. The objective was the Turkish defences on the Burj-Ghurabeh Ridge just west of the Jerusalem—Nablus road. The ridge is 5,000 yards long and was about 2,000 yards from our front line. The preparations for this raid were elaborate, since the operation was a complicated one, involving a descent of several hundred feet from our positions and a steep climb over rocky ground on the opposite side. The enemy works, which were well wired and strongly held, were assaulted from both flanks with complete success, 250 prisoners being taken and heavy losses inflicted.

The one offensive operation attempted by the enemy during this period was directed against our posts in the Jordan Valley north of the River Auja. A rocky ridge, Abu Tellul, ran north from the river, ending in a cliff at Musallabeh. This ridge, which had to be held to protect the water of the Auja, made a pronounced and awkward salient in the line of the Desert Corps. It was guarded by a series of small posts, the intervals between which could not always be covered by fire owing to the broken nature of the ground. Liman von Sanders had realised the danger of the extended line which General Allenby's hold of the valley had forced on him, and

sought a solution of his difficulties by driving us out of it or so cramping and contracting our hold of it as to render further operations east of the Jordan impossible or improbable. The attack was to have been made by two German battalions and two Turkish divisions. At 3.30 a.m. on July 14th the Germans broke in between the advanced posts and reached the crest of the Abu Tellul Ridge. The 1st A.L.H. Brigade, which was holding the position, quickly counter-attacked and drove the enemy back on to the advanced posts, which still held out. By 9 a.m. the fight was over and the original line restored. About 375 German prisoners were taken and over one hundred dead counted. The casualties of the Light Horse were only seventy. The Turks let their German allies down badly, for they made little effort to support their attack. The result of the action was a severe blow to German prestige and can hardly have improved relations between Turks and Germans.

During the attack a Turkish force advanced on the east of the Jordan towards El Henu, between Ghoraniyeh and the Dead Sea. It was charged by the Imperial Service Cavalry Brigade, who killed ninety Turks with the lance and took about a hundred prisoners.

By the end of August the E.E.F. was ready to play its part in the series of Allied victories that ended the World War. Allenby's great stroke had been planned and the instrument to give it effect was ready.

# THE THIRD PHASE—SYRIA

## CHAPTER VII

### THE FINAL OFFENSIVE

“Aestate demum adulta, reparato exercitu, instar fulminis labantes jam Turcos perculit; crebris proeliis fusos fugatosque intra septem et quadranginta dies tota Syria dejecit.”—(*Oration at Oxford to Lord Allenby.*)

1. *The Plan.*—Turkish dispositions and strength—General Allenby's plan—Role of the various portions of the army—Arrangements to deceive the enemy.

2. *The Battles of Megiddo.*—Preliminary attack by 53rd Division of XX. Corps—Attack of XXI. Corps—The break-through—The cavalry ride—Action at Nazareth—The infantry advance—Destruction of Seventh and Eighth Turkish Armies.

Order of Battle, E.E.F.—September, 1918.

(*SEE MAPS XVI., XVII., XVIII., XIX.*)

#### 1. *The Plan*

DURING the summer of 1918 the attention of the War Cabinet was naturally concentrated on weathering the storm in the West. In the middle of July, when it was obvious that the Germans' desperate bid for victory had failed, but when it seemed that the war would carry over into 1919, Mr. Lloyd George revived his favourite strategical idea of borrowing divisions from the West for a winter campaign in Palestine and restoring them in time for the spring campaign in France. An exchange of telegrams between London and Palestine quickly made it apparent that considerations of time and space rendered this project unrealisable. General Allenby was then left to do his best with the means and numbers at his disposal.

He had already during the spring manœuvred the Turks into a disposition of their forces favourable to his intentions. During the summer, while completing the reorganisation



and training of his own army and improving the capacity of his lines of communication, he took pains to keep the attention of his enemies fixed on the Jordan Valley and on their Eastern flank. He also noted the progressive deterioration of their morale and fighting power—evidenced by many signs, of which the increasing number of deserters to the British lines was the most apparent—and he perfected the details of his plan for their overthrow accordingly.

The enforced abandonment of the British offensive that had been planned for the spring had given the Turkish forces in Palestine a respite of four months in which to receive reinforcements and to consolidate their defence against the autumn campaigning season. Actually, the summer brought them little enhancement of their numbers and a further weakening of their spirit. The adventurers who ruled Turkey, on recognising the complete collapse of Russia at the beginning of 1918, had gambled on a German victory in the West and had embarked on a policy of territorial annexations in the Caucasus. Instead of soberly investing the whole of their remaining credit balance of men and resources as an insurance for the safety of the Palestine front—now their most important strategical interest—they squandered the bulk of it in sending armies to make the facile conquest of Batum, Kars, and Tiflis, and to penetrate Azerbaijan towards Baku. These activities could have little effect on the issue of the war, but they alarmed the British General Staff into organising a special force, with the mission of countering the influence and limiting the encroachments of the Turks in the Caucasus.\*

Meanwhile the Turkish front in Palestine was starved of men and supplies that should properly have been sent to it. According to Liman von Sanders, an attempt was even made to withdraw the whole of the German units from Palestine

\* This was the expedition known as "Dunsterforce," from its leader, Major-General Dunsterville. It consisted of specially selected officers and N.C.O.'s, who were to assist the elements of the local populations in the Caucasus favourable to the Allies to make head against the Turks and Bolsheviks. Starting from Mesopotamia in February, 1918, it passed through Persia, where it was delayed by the effects of Bolshevik propaganda. Part of it reached Baku in August, but was too late to accomplish its object, and had to withdraw.

for this Caucasus adventure. The 11th Jäger Battalion actually was taken away in June, a few weeks after its arrival.

The Turkish forces in Palestine were now organised into three armies, of which the Seventh and Eighth lay on the west of Jordan, and the Fourth on the east. The Eighth Army, which held the coastal sector and extended into the hills as far as Furkhah, a front of twenty miles, comprised the XXII. Corps (7th, 20th, 46th Divisions) and Asia Corps (16th and 19th Divisions, 701st, 702nd, 703rd German Battalions). Its commander was Djevad Pasha, who had succeeded our old and redoubtable adversary, Kress von Kressenstein, now in the Caucasus. Army headquarters were at Tul Keram. The Seventh Army continued the line to the Jordan Valley, holding approximately another twenty miles, with its main strength astride the Jerusalem—Nablus road. Mustapha Kemal—now President of the Turkish Republic—had taken over command of it in August, replacing Fevzi Pasha, who was ill. Army headquarters were at Nablus. The army comprised the III. Corps (1st and 11th Divisions) and XXIII. Corps (26th and 53rd Divisions). The Fourth Army lay in the Jordan Valley and on the Hills of Moab. It consisted of the II. Corps (24th Division and 3rd Cavalry Division) and VIII. Corps (48th and Composite Divisions, including 146th German Regiment). The commander of the Fourth Army was Djemal the Lesser—an able soldier, well known to the E.E.F.\*—and the headquarters were at Amman. The Commander-in-Chief, Liman von Sanders, had his headquarters at Nazareth.

The strength of the Turkish forces was approximately as shown on p. 195.

The ration strength south of Damascus was over 100,000.†

The Turkish rank and file were ill-clothed and ill-fed and very war-weary. Desertion was rife. The transport animals were in a wretched condition, since the lines of communication were working so badly that forage was often unobtainable. The bad feeling between the Turks and the Germans

\* See p. 28, and footnote.

† In the operations 75,000 prisoners were taken.

was acute. The opposition to the British advance was not likely to be so formidable as at Beersheba and Gaza. But the Turk fights well even when most miserable, and there was a stiffening of several thousand Germans in the force.

General Allenby had 12,000 sabres, 57,000 rifles, and 540 guns. He thus had a superiority of about two to one in total forces.\* In mounted troops his advantage was overwhelming. Although neither the quality nor the training of his army were quite as high as they had been when he began the Beersheba-Gaza battle nearly a year before, they were greatly superior to those of the Turks. With these advantages in numbers, in efficiency, and in spirit, a victory was to be looked for. The manner of that

	Sabres.	Rifles.	Guns.
Eighth Army—Coast to Furkhah . . . . .	—	10,000	157
Seventh Army—Furkhah to Jordan Valley . . . . .	—	7,000	111
Fourth Army—East of Jordan . . . . .	2,000	6,000	74
General Reserve . . . . .	—	3,000	30
Hejaz L. of C.—Maan and Hejaz Railway . . . . .	—	6,000	30
Total † . . . . .	2,000	32,000	402

victory—the boldness of the design, the sureness of its execution, the completeness of the enemy's ruin—make the operation a strategical masterpiece.

The plan was daring, but simple. The clue to General Allenby's strategy lay in the direction taken by the Turkish

\* The *ration* strength in the theatre, including all troops and over 80,000 Egyptians of the Camel Transport Corps and Labour Corps, was approximately 340,000. If, however, all labour working for and fed by the Army in the interior of Egypt, all followers, and all sick in hospital be included, a total of over 450,000 would be reached. The approximate number of animals was 62,000 horses, 44,000 mules, 36,000 camels, 12,500 donkeys.

† These figures are those on which General Allenby based his calculations and which he gives in his despatch. They are probably a fairly close estimate of the actual strength in the front line, but accurate figures are difficult to determine. Liman von Sanders would have us believe that his divisions averaged only 1,300 rifles—certainly an understatement.

communications. At Deraa Junction the railway feeding the Seventh and Eighth Armies, west of Jordan, branched off from the Hejaz line, which served the Fourth Army. It ran down the difficult gorge of the Yarmuk River to Semakh, at the southern end of the Lake of Tiberias. Crossing the Jordan at Jisr el Mejamie, it passed by Beisan up the Valley of Jezreel to El Afule, whence a branch continued along the Plain of Esdraelon to Haifa. The main line turned south to Jenin, where it entered the foothills of Samaria, through which it wound to Messudieh Junction, between Nablus and Tul Keram. It now turned west and reached the coastal plain at Tul Keram, continuing up to the front line. The branch from Messudieh to Nablus was incomplete.

Thus from Deraa to Afule the railway by which the Seventh and Eighth Armies drew their supplies ran practically parallel to their front line. Deraa, Beisan, Afule and Messudieh were the vital points of this line of communications, and the roads also centred on these places. The possession by the British forces of Deraa, Beisan, and Afule would close the lines of retreat of all three Turkish armies. Deraa was obviously outside the range of a rapid uninterrupted ride by his mounted forces such as General Allenby had in mind. But he could, and did, use the apprehension of a raid on Deraa, which he had so effectively instilled into the mind of his adversaries, to immobilise a large portion of the Turkish forces. And he proposed to use his Arab allies to foster this apprehension and to dislocate the working of the communications round Deraa, though he did not ask them to seize and hold the place.

Even without Deraa the seizure of Afule and Beisan would leave the Seventh and Eighth Armies with only one extremely narrow and difficult avenue of escape—on their eastern flank, where the roads were poor, the Jordan deep and swift, and the hills steep and desolate. Afule and Beisan were distant forty-five and sixty miles respectively from our front line, distances within the compass of a single continuous ride by cavalry, since the country was open and the going good for almost the whole way. There was no obstacle to rapid movement along either the Plain of Sharon

or Plain of Esdrælon. The crux of the ride would be the passage of the mountain belt which divides these two plains, that offshoot of the Judæan Range which breaks out to the north-west and ends in Mount Carmel, overlooking Haifa and the Bay of Acre. The width of this obstacle is about seven miles. Two routes lead across it from Sharon, of which the western debouches into Esdrælon at Abu Shushch, opposite Nazareth, and the eastern at El Lejjun or Megiddo, opposite El Afule. Neither route presents any great physical difficulties for a mounted force. On the other hand, either is easy of defence and would be hard to force against opposition.

Very prudently, General Allenby, in the first draft of his plan, aimed at a comparatively modest objective. As soon as the Turkish line near the coast was broken the mounted troops were to make for Messudieh Junction, thus completely turning the flank of the Eighth Turkish Army and threatening the line of retreat of the Seventh Army through Nablus. He kept to himself his more daring project of a wider and deeper sweep by the mounted troops, which would place them in rear of the Turkish armies at Afule and Beisan, till he could see his way more certainly and till disclosure of his scheme could be made without undue risk of its reaching the enemy. By the end of the summer he had weighed all chances and had appreciated the weakness of the enemy and the quality of his reorganised force. He calculated that his infantry could break the line quickly enough to enable the mounted troops either to forestall the enemy altogether at the hill passages from Sharon into Esdrælon or at least to reach them before the enemy could concentrate a sufficient force to bar them effectively. The original plan was, therefore, modified so as to aim not only at the defeat, but at the complete destruction, of the Seventh and Eighth Armies.

Before examining the details of the plan it is important to grasp its essential requirements. In the first place, the whole basis of the operation was that the great mass of the mounted troops should be launched on their ride northwards at the earliest possible moment, and that their strength

should be unimpaired by serious fighting till they had reached the Turkish rear. This required that the breach in the Turkish line should be swiftly and certainly made by the infantry, which must, therefore, be in overwhelming strength at the selected point and must be supported by the greatest possible weight of artillery. This implied that other parts of the extended line must be held as lightly as possible. Lastly, the enemy must be kept in ignorance of the concentration on the coast and must be led to expect a blow elsewhere.

The XXI. Corps, which was to break the way for the mounted troops, already comprised four divisions (3rd and 7th Indian, 54th, 75th) and the French and Italian contingents.\* A fifth division was to be added by the transfer of the 60th Division from the XX. Corps, which was then left with only two divisions (10th and 53rd). The greater part of the medium and heavy artillery was also allotted to the XXI. Corps, and one mounted brigade (the 5th A.L.H.) was detailed to it. Near the coast, behind the left of the XXI. Corps, the Desert Mounted Corps (4th and 5th Cavalry Divisions, Australian Division) was to be secretly assembled.

The XX. Corps, in the Judæan Hills, besides handing over one division and some artillery, was to extend its front to enable the XXI. Corps to concentrate more closely. In the Jordan Valley, after the departure of the Desert Mounted Corps for the coast, a detachment was to be formed under Major-General Chaytor, consisting of the Anzac Mounted Division and eight battalions of infantry (Imperial Service Brigade, two battalions of West Indians, two battalions of Jews).

The roles assigned to these various bodies were as follows :—

The XXI. Corps was to assault at dawn after a short but intense bombardment, and to break a way for the cavalry between the sea and the railway. The Corps was then to swing north-east, pivoting on its right, and to drive the enemy into and through the foothills towards Messudieh,

\* The French contingent was approximately equivalent to a brigade. The Italian contingent was small.

and thence down the road to Jenin into the arms of the cavalry at Afule. The 5th A.L.H. Brigade was to cover the left flank of the Corps during the operation, and was directed firstly on Tul Keram.

The Desert Mounted Corps, so soon as the infantry had cleared a way for it, was to ride north along the coast, strictly disregarding any enemy force that did not directly bar its path, till it reached the line of the Nahr el Mefjir, where the Turks were believed to have constructed a reserve position and to have occupied it with a few troops. The divisions were then to turn north-east and cross by two hill passes into the Plain of Esdrælon. They were to occupy Afule, Beisan, and the bridge at Jisr el Mejamie, and to send a detachment to seize Liman von Sanders' headquarters at Nazareth.

The XX. Corps was to swing forward its right so as to block the routes leading from the hills to the Jisr ed Damieh crossing over the Jordan as early as possible. It was also to advance on Nablus. The timing of its operations was dependant on the progress made by the XXI. Corps.

Chaytor's force in the Jordan Valley was to secure the right flank, to conceal the departure of the remainder of the mounted troops, and by demonstrations to induce the enemy to believe that another attack towards Amman was intended.

Further to the east, Feisal's Arabs were given an important part to play. His sincerity of purpose and tireless diplomacy had by now extended the spirit of the Hejaz revolt up to and within the walls of Damascus. The desert, the countryside, and the city, for once united in a single cause, were waiting his signal to rise and shake themselves free of the long-tolerated Turk. Meanwhile Lawrence, Joyce, and other British officers had been planning the organisation and tactics to make this final Arab effort practicable and secure. The regular Arab Army, under Jafar Pasha,\* composed mainly of ex-prisoners from the Turkish Army, had reached a strength of some 8,000 men. The gift by General Allenby of 2,000 riding camels, when the Imperial Camel Corps was

\* See p. 37.

broken up, enabled Feisal to form a mobile column from his regulars, which was strengthened by small detachments of British armoured cars, Indian machine gunners, and Algerian artillerymen. This was the stable core of the force, to which gathered the incalculable musters of the desert. The oasis of Azrak, some fifty miles to the east of Amman, was chosen as the base and place of assembly. The revolt of the Arabs had reached its last stage, which was to bring them to their desired goal of Damascus.\*

The role given to the Arabs by General Allenby was to cut the Turkish communications north and west of Deraa. It was hoped that this, besides embarrassing the working of the Turkish rear services and preventing the reinforcement of the Turkish main armies from the north, might also draw off reserves from the Haifa—Afule—Nazareth area, and thus lighten the task of the British cavalry. The Arab attacks on the line were, therefore, to begin two days earlier than Allenby's great blow.

General Allenby's plan was in fact that of the Gaza—Beersheba battle reversed. *Then* he struck at the Turkish left flank while persuading them that his intention was to break through along the coast. *Now* he proposed to break through on the coast while causing the Turk to apprehend a blow at his left flank. The steps taken to mislead the enemy as to the real point of attack formed one of the chief features of the preparations for the battle. They may be considered in two categories—the measures to conceal the real concentration on the coast, and the measures to simulate a concentration on the eastern flank, in the Jordan Valley.

Three complete divisions (4th Cavalry, Australian Mounted and 60th) and many batteries and other units had to be moved from the Jordan Valley and Judæan Hills to the coastal area. All moves were made by night and with all

\* The Arab preparations were threatened in August by the assembly of Turkish forces for an offensive from Amman. To delay this and to give the Arabs time to complete their concentration, the last battalion of the Imperial Camel Corps was loaned to Feisal for a month and made a diversion from Akaba against the line south of Maan. This operation helped too in creating the impression of activity to the east, and deceiving the Turks as to the real point of attack. The battalion marched about 700 miles in 41 days, during which the camels were watered twelve times.



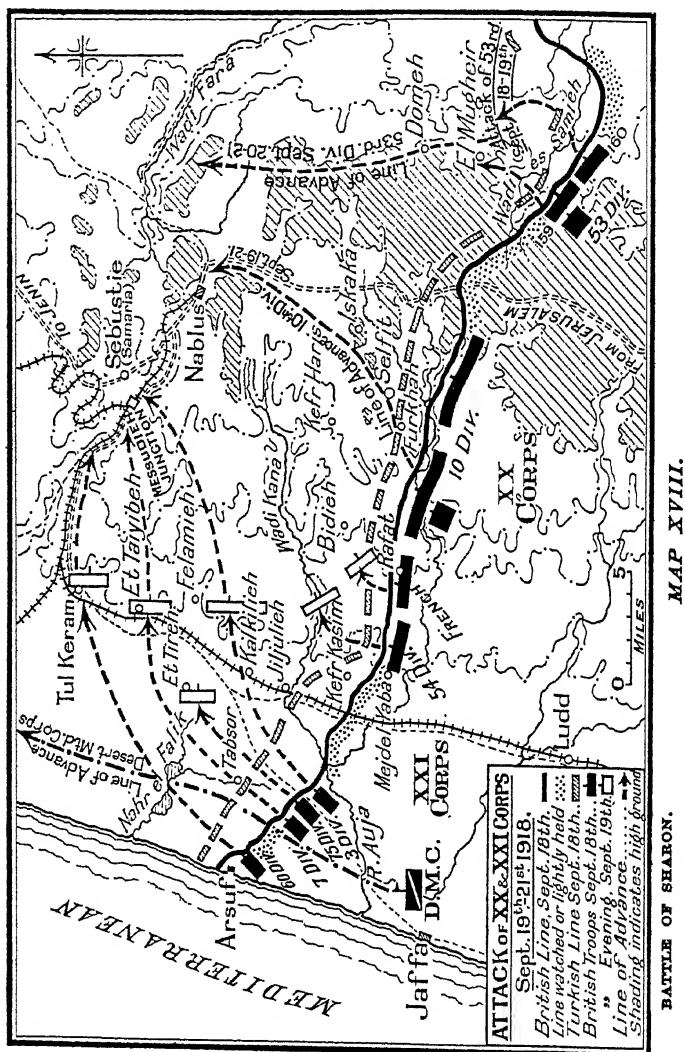
possible secrecy. The issue of written orders was strictly limited. The olive woods and orange groves north of Jaffa were used to hide the increase of troops. The units normally camped behind the line in this sector had during the summer been cantoned somewhat widely and distributed in such a way that additional troops could be accommodated without any increase of tentage or bivouacs. Thus battalions in reserve had for some time previously been distributed between two half-battalion camps. When the time came, each of these camps was occupied by a whole battalion, and so the force in the area was doubled without any change being visible from the air. This detail shows the careful foresight with which the operation was planned. But it was above all the dominance secured by our Air Force that enabled the concentration to be concealed. So complete was the mastery it had obtained in the air by hard fighting that by September a hostile aeroplane rarely crossed our lines at all.\*

On the other wing everything possible was done to suggest the preparation of a great attack. The camps in the Jordan valley vacated by the cavalry were left standing and new ones were pitched. Fifteen thousand dummy horses, of canvas, filled the deserted horse lines. Sleighs drawn by mules raised clouds of dust to make observation difficult and to simulate activity. The British West Indian battalions on several days marched from Jerusalem down to the valley, returning by lorries at night to repeat the march next day. Additional bridges were thrown across the Jordan. Wireless traffic was continued from Talaat ed Dumm long after the headquarters of Desert Mounted Corps had left that place for the Coastal Plain. Agents were despatched by Lawrence with instructions to bargain for the supply of forage in large quantities about Amman. Elaborate preparations were made for the transfer of G.H.Q. to Jerusalem, an hotel being cleared, telephone lines laid, and so forth.

The success of the measures taken to prevent the enemy becoming aware of the plan was proved by an enemy intelligence summary subsequently captured. This document, dated September 17th, showed that the concentration

\* See paragraph 10 of General Allenby's Despatch of October 31st, 1917.

on the coast was quite unsuspected and that on the contrary reports indicated a strengthening of the British forces in the



Jordan Valley.

A few figures will show the overwhelming advantage

which General Allenby's strategy had gained for him. When his concentration was complete, he had massed on a front of some fifteen miles (approximately one-quarter of his total front) 35,000 infantry, 9,000 cavalry and 383 guns. On the same front the unconscious Turk had only 8,000 infantry with 130 guns. On the remaining forty-five miles of front 22,000 infantry, 3,000 cavalry and 157 guns faced 24,000 Turks with 270 guns. The battle was practically won before a shot was fired.

## *2. The Battles of Megiddo*

“If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses?”

(Jeremiah xii. 5.)

On September 16th Feisal's Arabs and the Air Force began the preliminary operations designed to disorganise the enemy's communications and to focus his attention on Deraa and his eastern flank. The attacks by the Air Force were heavy and destructive. Deraa had been carefully kept free of air raids till now, and the garrison was unprepared and unprotected. The Arab attacks on the railway, under the skilful direction of Lawrence—by now a fastidious artist in demolitions—were equally telling. On the 16th the line was effectively cut to the south between Deraa and Amman, and on the 17th to the north, between Deraa and Damascus, and to the west, between Deraa and Afule. The enemy commander-in-chief, Liman von Sanders, reacted to these attacks as had been hoped, by sending a part of his reserves, including some Germans, from Haifa towards Deraa.

By September 18th Allenby's concentration was complete and his main forces stood ready for attack. The opening move of the great battle was made by the XX. Corps in the Judæan hills. The Corps, which had now only two divisions, the 10th and 53rd, held a front of over twenty miles. Its general plan was to advance on Nablus, when the time came, by a converging movement from both flanks of this line rather than by a direct advance down the main road, where the difficulties of ground were considerable and where the Turks obviously expected attack. The con-

centration of the two divisions towards the flanks in furtherance of this plan left a wide gap in the centre of the Corps' front. This was watched by a detachment improvised from the Corps cavalry regiment (Worcestershire Yeomanry), two Pioneer battalions, and details from the Corps Reinforcement Camp.

The object of the preliminary operation to be carried out by the 53rd Division on the night of September 18th/19th was to swing forward the right flank of the Corps over the obstacle of a steep and difficult cleft in the hills—the Wadi es Samieh. Once this was passed, the subsequent advance of the 53rd Division would lie along a watershed and would not have any deep wadis to cross. This was important, in view of the role assigned to the division in the further stages of the battle, after the attack of the XXI. Corps, *i.e.*, to hurry forward and seal the eastern exits from the hill country about Nablus to the Jordan Valley.

The 53rd Division employed two brigades in the operation. The right brigade, the 160th, moved out as soon as it was dark and plunged down into the Wadi es Samieh on a wide turning movement over abrupt and rocky ground, intended to bring the battalions out on the flank or in the rear of the Turkish prepared positions. This involved a steep climb on a narrow front out of the wadi. When the crest was reached the battalions wheeled to the left in succession and attacked the Turkish positions from the east. The distance to the farthest objective was over seven miles, and only the roughest of goat-tracks were available for the movement. The success of the operation, which completely surprised the Turks, and resulted in the securing of all objectives with little loss, reflected great credit on the staff arrangements made by the division and on the skill and discipline of the troops.

At 10.30 p.m., when the assault of the 160th Brigade was fairly launched, the 159th Brigade attacked the Turkish works further west. No turning movement was possible here, and there was little chance of surprise. The Turkish resistance was therefore greater and the fighting more severe. All objectives were, however, secured except at one point, where a strong Turkish redoubt withstood three assaults.

The fighting on the 53rd Division front was just dying down, when a sudden roar of guns from the plain to the west announced that the great break-through of the XXI. Corps had begun. Already the Air Force had set out to bomb the headquarters of the Seventh and Eighth Armies at Nablus and Tul Keram, and the main telegraphic and telephonic exchange at El Afule, with the object of disorganising communication between the various parts of the Turkish Army.

The front of the XXI. Corps extended from Rafat in the foothills to the sea a little north of Arsuf, a distance of over fifteen miles. About one-third of this front, where the ground was unfavourable for attack, was to be merely watched or lightly held. The actual frontage of assault amounted to about ten miles, and was not continuous. The French detachment and the 54th Division on the right fought in the foothills. The French were to storm a strongly-held ridge opposite Rafat and there to form a secure pivot for the wheel of the XXI. Corps to the right. The 54th Division, between Rafat and Mejdal Yaba, was to advance on Kefr Kasim and thence swing north-east. Then came a wide gap of open plain unfavourable for direct assault. The Turkish works which commanded this area were to be assaulted from their western flank in the second stage. Beyond it the 3rd (Indian), 75th, and 7th (Indian) Divisions were to assault firstly, the group of enemy works known as the Tabsor defences, which centred on the village of that name, and secondly, the line Jiljulieh—Kalkilieh—Et Tireh. Further west was another gap. Lastly, on the coast, the 60th Division was to reach the mouth of the Nahr Falik and there form a bridgehead through which the 5th Cavalry Division was to pass. The 60th Division was then to make north-east to Tul Keram with the 5th A.L.H. Brigade on its left.

The action of the Corps was exactly that of opening a wide door, the French contingent at Rafat forming the hinge and the 60th Division the handle. The attack was supported by 385 guns, of which all but seventy were field guns or howitzers. The proportion was thus approximately a gun to every 50 yards, the heaviest concentration of artillery in

the Palestine campaigns, but comparatively weak according to the standards of the Western front at this period of the war.\*

The Turkish front system of defences in the Coastal Plain ran along a low sandy ridge and had a depth of about 3,000 yards. The works were well constructed and formed a continuous line; they were wired, but Turkish wire was never really formidable. The rear system ran west from Et Tireh to the Nahr el Falik on the coast. It was about two to three miles behind the first system; its right was protected by the marshes, passable only at a few points, through which flows the Nahr el Falik. The works in this system were not continuous and were unprotected by wire.

The infantry assault was to be abrupt and to move swiftly. There was, properly speaking, no preliminary bombardment. The first crash of the artillery lasted for fifteen minutes, during which the leading waves advanced from their positions of deployment to the enemy's front line. Thereafter the assault swept onwards under cover of a barrage, which was in places actually timed to move as rapidly as a hundred yards in a minute. No attempt at systematic wire-cutting was made by the artillery; arrangements were made by the leading troops to cut it by hand or to carry means of crossing it.

Zero hour—4.30 a.m. on September 19th—was marked by fifteen minutes' sudden and intense fire by every available gun. There is little to be written of the infantry assault which followed it. It was completely and overwhelmingly successful. Only in a few places was it even temporarily held up. The hardest fighting was probably on the extreme right, where the French detachment had an obstinately defended position to capture. The 54th Division also

\* The following figures may be of interest for comparison :

(a) At the Battle of the Somme, July 1st, 1916, there was approximately a gun or howitzer to every twenty yards of front assaulted, the proportion of heavy or medium guns and howitzers being one in every three.

(b) At the Battle of the Scarpe, April 4th, 1917, there was a gun or howitzer to every ten yards of front, the proportion of heavy and medium guns or howitzers being rather more than one in three.

(c) In the Fourth Army attack on August 8th, 1918, the proportion was again approximately a gun or howitzer to every ten yards, the heavy and medium artillery having risen to a proportion of seven to twelve.

experienced stout resistance for a while north of Kefr Kasim. But both French and 54th Division soon overcame all opposition and reached the objectives assigned to them, thus making a secure pivot for the wheel of the remainder of the corps. In the centre the 3rd, 75th and 7th Divisions carried the front system at the first rush. The Turks, utterly surprised and aghast at the suddenness and pace of the onslaught, offered little resistance. The 3rd Division now faced to its right and carried the defences of Jiljulieh and Kalkilieh from the flank. The 75th Division went on to Et Tireh, where it had some of the severest fighting of the day. The 7th Division cleared the plain up to the marshes on the coast and then swung right-handed, north of Et Tireh, into the foothills. The 60th Division, on a narrow front along the coast, broke through all enemy defences at a great pace and by 7 a.m. secured a bridgehead near the mouth of the Nahr el Falik through which the 5th Cavalry Division passed.\* The 60th Division now made for Tul Keram, with the 5th A.L.H. Brigade on its left.

Before midday the Eighth Turkish Army had broken into hopeless confusion, and its remnants were pouring up the plain towards Tul Keram and thence along the road which runs down a valley to Messudieh Junction. On the troops and transport crowded in this defile the Air Force rained bombs and machine-gun bullets with deadly effect, soon blocking the road. The 5th A.L.H. Brigade, moving round Tul Keram on the north, completed the rout along this road and made numerous captures. It also reached the Messudieh—Jenin railway and cut it. The 60th Division, after seventeen miles of hard marching and fighting reached and captured Tul Keram before dark. The line reached by the XXI. Corps at nightfall ran by Rafat (French)—Bidieh (54th Division)—Felamieh (3rd Division)—Et Taiyibeh (7th Division)—Tul Keram (60th Division). The 75th Division was in corps reserve about Et Tireh. Thus the infantry had well fulfilled their task of breaking the Turkish Eighth Army and clearing the way for the mounted troops, whose doings will now be related.

\* The front troops of the 60th Division advanced 7,000 yards in 2½ hours.

On the Turkish side all was complete confusion. Although a havildar of an Indian regiment had deserted to the Turks on September 17th and had given information of the hour and date of the coming attack, the enemy seems to have profited little by the warning. Certainly the scope and manner of the attack were a complete surprise. The raids of the Air Force in the early hours of the morning had broken communication between the headquarters of the armies and Liman von Sanders, who remained, as will be seen, ignorant of the completeness of the rout of the Eighth Army, and of the movements of his adversary till the situation was rudely brought home to him by the arrival of a cavalry brigade at Nazareth at dawn on the 20th.

During darkness of the night 18th/19th the 4th and 5th Cavalry Divisions moved up from their bivouacs at Sarona and Selmeah and placed themselves close behind the infantry, the 4th Cavalry Division behind the 7th (Indian) Division and the 5th behind the 60th Division. The Australian Mounted Division (less the 5th A.L.H. Brigade) moved from Ludd up to Sarona. The mounted troops were thus ready to take immediate advantage of the infantry success. At 6.30 a.m. the 5th Cavalry Division moved forward along the seashore under cover of the cliffs which bordered the beach. By 8.30 a.m. the division was across the Nahr el Falik and fairly launched on its ride north. The 4th Cavalry Division further inland was a little later in getting started owing to some difficulty in passing the wire entanglements \* ; but by 10 a.m. it also was across the Nahr el Falik and well out into the open.† The orders to the mounted divisions were simple and explicit. They were to move on Beisan and El Afule as expeditiously as possible, avoiding engagement with any Turkish troops that did not directly bar the way to their objectives.

A little before noon the 5th Division, after crossing the

\* The pioneers of the Australian Mounted Division did some very fine work close behind the infantry of the 7th Division in making a passage through the wire for the 5th Cavalry Division.

† The Horse Artillery batteries of the Divisions had moved up into the line on the 17th and had taken part in the preliminary bombardment. They rejoined their Divisions as these passed through the infantry line on the morning of the 19th.



Nahr Iskanderun, reached Liktera on the Nahr el Mefjir. The 4th Division reached the same stream a few miles further inland shortly afterwards. The leading brigades of both divisions had ridden over some enemy detachments found in position across their path and had taken some hundreds of prisoners. A halt was now made to water and feed. The 5th Division sent on a squadron supported by armoured cars to reconnoitre the track across the hills to Abu Shusheh, while the 4th Division sent on a brigade with armoured cars to seize the Musmus Defile to El Lejjun (Megiddo).

Between 5 and 6 p.m. the advance was resumed. The 5th Cavalry Division left its artillery and one brigade, the 15th, at Liktera to cross next day, the road being reported too rough for artillery to negotiate by night. The remaining two brigades were through the pass and out on the plain by 2.30 a.m. on the 20th. They owed their success in finding their way largely to the commander of the 13th Brigade, a fluent Arabic scholar. The leading brigade, the 13th, then made straight for the headquarters of the enemy Commander-in-Chief at Nazareth. The brigade reached Nazareth at about 5.30 a.m., to the complete surprise of Liman von Sanders and the personnel of his headquarters. Unfortunately the northern exits of the town, which lies in a hollow among some steep rocky hills, were not blocked, and a way of retreat was left open to Tiberias. Nor was exact knowledge of the location of the G.H.Q. available, and by the time that it was found Liman von Sanders was elsewhere. Presently the enemy recovered from his surprise. Street fighting developed in which mounted men were at a disadvantage. The brigade had been weakened by a number of detachments before reaching Nazareth and was not in sufficient numbers to complete the occupation of the town. Having located the enemy headquarters and seized the most important documents in it, the 13th Brigade withdrew to the plain, taking some 1,250 prisoners with it. The 14th Brigade meanwhile had moved on El Afule.

The 4th Cavalry Division passed the Musmus Defile during the night, after some delay due to a loss of direction by the leading brigade, and reached the plain at El Lejjun by dawn.

It was just in time. A small body of Turks was surprised and rounded up in Lejjun. As the leading troops moved out of Lejjun, the Turkish force, of which the captured detachment was the advanced guard, was seen approaching. This was a column of six companies with twelve machine guns which Liman von Sanders had ordered forward from Nazareth and Afule on the previous afternoon to block the Musmus Defile against the possibility of a British cavalry raid. It received short shrift from the leading regiment of the Division, the 2nd Lancers. Supported by the fire of armoured cars, the Indian squadrons were into the enemy infantry with the lance before they could even complete their deployment. Forty-six Turks were speared, and the remainder, about 500, surrendered. The whole action had only lasted a few minutes.

The 4th Division now moved on El Afule, which it reached at 8 a.m., a little later than the leading troops of the 14th Brigade of the 5th Division. Much rolling stock, three intact aeroplanes, and large quantities of medical and other stores were found. So little had the enemy realised the situation that one of his aeroplanes actually landed on the aerodrome later in the morning and was captured. Leaving the 5th Division in occupation of Afule, the 4th Division rode down the Valley of Jezreel for Beisan. It arrived there at 4.30 p.m. and captured the garrison, which offered little resistance. The division had marched seventy miles in thirty-four hours.\* One regiment, the 19th Lancers, was left at El Afule and marched thence during the night to seize the railway bridge over the Jordan at Jisr Mejamie.

Meanwhile the remainder of the mounted force had reached the Plain of Esdrælon. The 15th Brigade crossed the hills early on the 20th and joined the 5th Cavalry Division at El Afule. The Australian Mounted Division (less 5th A.L.H. Brigade, still on the left flank of the XXI. Corps north-east

\* The famous Confederate cavalry leader, J. E. B. Stuart, in his raid round the rear of McClellan's Army at the beginning of "the Seven Days," covered 110 miles in about 48 hours (June 13th to 15th, 1862). In his raid of October 10th to 12th, in the same year, he marched 90 miles in about 48 hours and 36 miles in the succeeding 8 hours, in all 126 miles in about 60 hours. His force in both raids was small, equivalent to a weak brigade.

of Tul Keram), also crossed the Carmel Range and reached Lejjun about 11 a.m. The 3rd A.L.H. Brigade moved thence on Jenin, the northern outlet of the Dothan Pass down which the road and railway from Nablus wind. The brigade reached Jenin in the afternoon. The leading troops, without hesitation, charged straight into the town with drawn swords \* and speedily crushed all resistance of the astonished and demoralised garrison, who had not yet realised the presence of our cavalry in their rear. The brigade was then disposed to await the expected arrival of Turkish units retiring from Nablus and Tul Keram.

Thus by the evening of September 20th, thirty-six hours after the opening of the battle, the Turkish Seventh and Eighth Armies were already doomed to destruction. Their natural lines of retreat down which they were being hustled by our advancing infantry were in the hands of a numerous and exultant cavalry. All communications were broken, so that no combined action to break through the ring could be concerted. Indeed the Turks were as yet unaware of the extent of the disaster which had befallen them. The only way of escape still open was eastwards across the Jordan, and this was rapidly being contracted.

To return to the action of our infantry. As has already been told, the date of the main advance by the XX. Corps had been made dependent on the progress of the XXI. Corps. About noon on the 19th, when the success of the XXI. Corps was evident, orders were sent to the XX. Corps to begin its advance that night. The objectives of the Corps were to clear the hill country up to Nablus and to block the routes leading east to the Jordan Valley, the enemy's only remaining avenue of escape.

The 53rd Division on the right had a fairly well-defined watershed along which to advance. To the east of this main ridge the hills broke steeply down to the Jordan, to the west they descended gradually to where the Jerusalem—Nablus main road wound through the hills. But though there were no deep wadis to cross, the ground was difficult and broken,

\* This was the first opportunity of the Australians to use their newly-acquired weapon (see p. 189).

well suited to the delaying tactics of rearguards. The division had no easy task.

The ground opposite the left of the Corps' front, west of the Nablus road, consisted of a series of ridges running north-east and south-west, divided by steep and narrow wadis. The principal ridge was marked by the villages Iskaka—Selfit—Furkhah. The last-named of these lay in the enemy's front line opposite the left of the Corps, where the 10th Division was now concentrated. It was strongly garrisoned and defended. The defences were, however, constructed mainly to meet a direct attack from the south. It had been the deliberate policy of the XX. Corps, since the line opposite Furkhah had been held, to induce the enemy by raid, reconnaissance and demonstration to expect attack from the south and to neglect the western end of the ridge, up which it was always intended that the attack should be made.

At 7.45 p.m. on September 19th the 10th Division began their advance against the western end of the Furkhah spur. The attack, it was afterwards learnt, just anticipated the enemy's withdrawal in consequence of the happenings on his right during the day. Strong resistance was at first met, but once it was overcome the advance proceeded as rapidly as the difficulties of the ground allowed. By 4.30 a.m. on the 20th the right column (29th Brigade) had reached Selfit, and the left column was approaching Kefr Haris. But when day broke the advance of the division was checked. The enemy rearguards were strong and well posted, and the artillery was unable to come to the support of the infantry till tracks had been made for the guns. Progress became very slow and casualties were fairly heavy. The 53rd Division, which had attacked at dawn on the 20th, had a similar experience, and made little headway this day.

On the left of the 10th Division, the 3rd and 7th Indian Divisions of the XXI. Corps continued to advance north-east up the hills towards Samaria, while the 60th Division pushed east along the Tul Keram—Nablus road. Their progress was steady but slow.

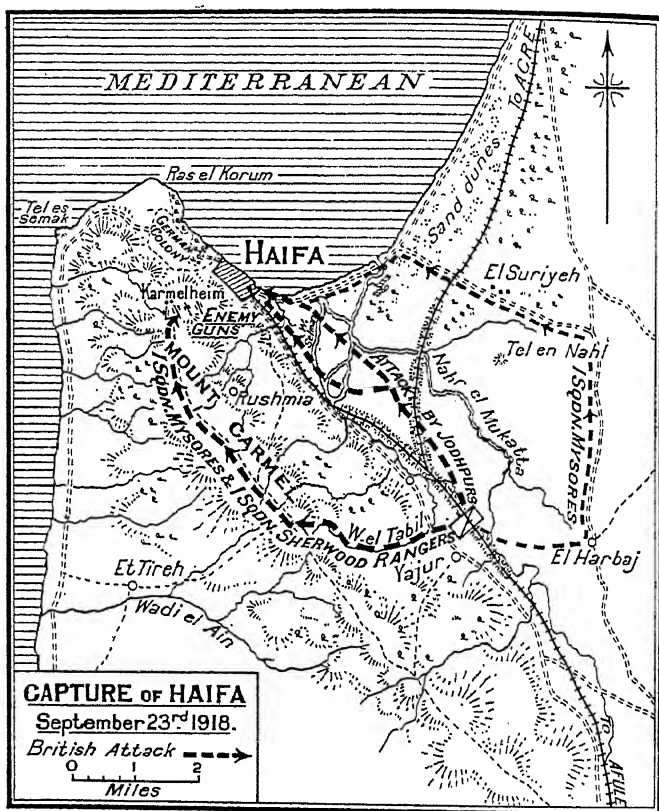
Thus the general situation on the evening of September 20th was that the Coastal Plain was cleared of the enemy,

that our cavalry was firmly established across his main lines of retreat, but that his rearguards were still offering a stubborn resistance to our infantry in the tangled hills of the Judæan Range. Orders for the 21st prescribed a continuance of the infantry advance, with a special effort by the XX. Corps to reach the high ground north and north-east of Nablus so as to block the enemy's escape to the Jordan crossing at Jisr ed Damieh by the Wadi Fara road.

The 21st saw the last serious infantry engagements of the campaign. On the fronts of both the XX. and XXI. Corps the enemy rearguards began to crumble early in the morning. The 10th Division advanced with great dash and reached Nablus about noon, just as the 5th A.L.H. Brigade rode into it from the west. All organised resistance on the part of the Seventh and Eighth Armies was now at an end.

The greater part of the Eighth Army was already prisoner. Many had been captured in the original infantry assault and in the pursuit up the plain. A long column of the survivors had retired down the Dothan road to Jenin, only to find the Australians waiting for them and to be forced into submission. The small residue of the Eighth and the greater portion of the Seventh Army still at large had set out from Nablus during the night of September 20th/21st by a motor-road which the 'Turks had made down the Wadi Fara to Beisan and the Jordan. Soon after dawn our airmen saw a long column of artillery, transport and troops winding down this narrow hill track. Near Nablus the Wadi Fara is a precipitous gorge, into one side of which the road was cut. For four hours our aeroplanes succeeded each other in raining bombs and bullets on the mass pent helplessly in the defile. The head of the column was soon blocked, all movement ceased, and the survivors dispersed in panic into the hills. Ninety guns, fifty lorries, and about 1,000 other vehicles were found deserted in the defile next day. The demoralised and disorganised survivors of the column were scattered in the hills and valleys between the Wadi Fara and Beisan. A few escaped over the Jordan, but by far the greater part were captured by the mounted troops in the following days.

Here are a few details of the doings of the cavalry in the days between September 20th and 24th. The 13th Brigade returned to Nazareth and reoccupied it on the morning of the 21st. Soon after midnight of the 21st/22nd the 18th



MAP XIX.

Lancers, on the Acre road to the west of the town, were attacked by a Turkish battalion from Haifa. After a short fight the Turks were routed, and left thirty dead and over 200 prisoners. The whole of the 5th Cavalry Division now concentrated towards Nazareth, with orders to take possession of Haifa and Acre. There were reports that the enemy

had already evacuated Haifa, and a distinguished artillery officer, in a Rolls-Royce with an escort of armoured cars, set out on the afternoon of the 22nd to occupy the town. The expedition was met with effective shell fire on approaching Haifa, and returned to report that a more serious force was required. Next day the whole of the 5th Division moved on Acre and Haifa. The 13th Brigade took Acre and its garrison of some two hundred Turks and two guns with little difficulty, but at Haifa there was a spirited little action.

The road into Haifa from the east runs close under the steep slopes of Mount Carmel, while the Nahr el Mukatta ("the brook Kishon"), which runs a mile to the north, is impassable by reason of its marshy banks. The Turks were strongly posted just outside Haifa to hold the defile thus formed. Their guns were on Mount Carmel, while machine guns at the foot swept the road and approaches. The leading brigade of the 5th Cavalry Division, the 15th (composed of Imperial Service units) had only two regiments immediately available, the Mysore and Jodhpur Lancers. One squadron of the former was sent to climb Mount Carmel by a steep track and silence the enemy's guns. After giving this movement time to develop, the Jodhpur Lancers, supported by covering fire from a battery, machine guns, and the remaining two squadrons of the Mysore (the fourth had been sent on a wide turning movement to the north), made a mounted attack on the Turks holding the defile. It was successful, and the squadrons then galloped on into the town. Almost simultaneously the Mysore squadron, opportunely reinforced by a squadron of the Sherwood Rangers, reached the guns on Mount Carmel and took them by a mounted charge. Sixteen guns and 700 prisoners were taken as a result of this action. The attack was well arranged and boldly carried out, but could hardly have succeeded had not the Turks been fighting under the shadow of disaster and shaken by the knowledge that their eventual defeat was inevitable. The capture of Haifa was at once used to ease the supply situation, and it was not long before stores landed here could be sent to Semakh by the Turkish railway.

The Australian Mounted Division, to which the 5th A.L.H. Brigade had returned on the 22nd, remained about Afule and Jenin collecting and disposing of the numerous prisoners. Further south, the 4th Cavalry Division was very busily engaged in rounding up the remains of the Seventh Army. Early on September 22nd a part of Chaytor's force had seized the bridge at Jisr ed Damieh and blocked escape that way. There were still large numbers of the enemy between the Wadi Fara and Beisan. These were dealt with during the 22nd, 23rd, and 24th. Some came into Beisan and surrendered, many were collected by the cavalry regiment of the XX. Corps (Worcester Yeomanry), which was sent in pursuit from Nablus towards Beisan ; two large bodies endeavouring to escape across the Jordan were intercepted and captured by the 4th Cavalry Division after some fighting. Only one disciplined body (the German Asia Corps) and a few hundred stragglers succeeded in breaking out of the trap ; for all practical purposes the Turkish Seventh and Eighth Armies had been wholly annihilated. The destruction of the Fourth Army was the next purpose of the British commander.

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## ORDER OF BATTLE—E.E.F.

SEPTEMBER 19, 1918.

DESERT MOUNTED CORPS (Lieut.-General Sir H. Chauvel).

*4th Cavalry Division* (Major-General Sir G. de S. Barrow).

10th Cavalry Brigade.

11th       "       "

12th       "       "

20th Brigade R.H.A.

12th L.A.M. Battery.

No. 7 Light Car Patrol.

*5th Cavalry Division* (Major-General H. J. M. MacAndrew).

13th Cavalry Brigade.

14th       "       "

15th       "       "

Essex Battery, R.H.A.

11th L.A.M. Battery.

No. 1 Light Car Patrol.



*Australian Mounted Division* (Major-General H. W. Hodgson).

3rd Australian Light Horse Brigade.

4th       "       "       "       "

19th Brigade R.H.A.

XX. CORPS (Lieut.-General Sir P. Chetwode).

53rd *Division* (Major-General S. F. Mott).

158th Infantry Brigade.

159th       "       "

160th       "       "

265th, 266th, 267th Brigades R.F.A., each with three batteries of twelve 18-pdrs. and four 4.5-inch hows.

39th Indian Mountain Battery.

Troop Corps Cavalry Regiment (1/1st Worcester Yeomanry).

10th *Division* (Major-General J. R. Longley).

29th Infantry Brigade.

30th       "       "

31st       "       "

67th, 68th, 263rd Brigades R.F.A. (67th and 68th Brigades with three batteries of twelve 18-pdrs. and four 4.5-inch hows. ; 263rd Brigade with six 18-pdrs. and four 4.5-inch hows.).

Hong Kong and Singapore Mountain Battery.

" *Watson's Force*" (holding centre of XX. Corps' Front).

Corps Cavalry Regiment (1/1st Worcester Yeomanry).

Pioneer Battalions (2/155th and 1/155th) of 10th and 53rd Divisions.

Corps Reinforcement Detachment (700 strong).

XX. CORPS HEAVY ARTILLERY.

*For support of 53rd Division.*

103rd Brigade R.G.A.—

R. Section 10th Heavy Battery.

L.       "       "       "       "

205th Siege Battery.

387th       "       "       " (less 1 gun).

392nd       "       "

*For support of 10th Division.*

421st Siege Battery.

397th       "       "       " (1 gun).

2 captured 15 cm. hows.

2       "       105 mm.       "

3       "       75 mm.       "

\* 5th A.L.H. Brigade was attached to XXI. Corps till September 22.

## XXI. CORPS (Lieut.-General Sir E. Bulfin).

3rd (*Lahore*) Division (Major-General A. R. Hoskins).

7th Infantry Brigade.

8th       "       "

9th       "       "

4th, 8th, 53rd Brigades R.F.A., each with twelve 18-pdrs.  
and four 4.5-inch hows.

7th (*Indian*) Division (Major-General Sir V. B. Fane).

19th Infantry Brigade.

21st       "       "

28th       "       "

261st, 262nd, 264th Brigades R.F.A., each with twelve  
18-pdrs. and four 4.5-inch hows.

54th (*East Anglian*) Division (Major-General S. W. Hare).

161st Infantry Brigade.

162nd       "       "

163rd       "       "

270th, 271st, 272nd Brigades R.F.A., each with twelve  
18-pdrs. and four 4.5-inch hows.

60th (*London*) Division (Major-General Sir J. S. M. Shea).

179th Infantry Brigade.

180th       "       "

181st       "       "

301st, 302nd, 303rd Brigades R.F.A., each with twelve  
18-pdrs. and four 4.5-inch hows.

5th Australian Light Horse Brigade (under orders of  
60th Division).

French Palestine Contingent.

Corps mounted troops (Composite Yeomanry Regiment).

## XXI. CORPS HEAVY ARTILLERY.

*Sub-Group under the Right Group.*

4.7-inch Battery, R.G.A.

300 S.B., R.G.A., 6-inch Section.

334 S.B., R.G.A., One Section.

*Right Group.*

100th Brigade, R.G.A., Headquarters—

15 H.B., R.G.A.

134 S.B.,       "

334       "       "       One Section.

43       "       "       " Bessie."

*Right Centre Group.*

95th Brigade, R.G.A., Headquarters—

181 H.B., R.G.A.

304 S.B., „

314 „ „

383 „ „

422 „ „

5.9-inch Hows. Section.

*Left Centre Group.*

102nd Brigade, R.G.A., Headquarters—

91 H.B., R.G.A.

209 S.B., „

380 „ „

440 „ „

300 „ „ 8 inch Section.

43 „ „ "Lizzie."

*Left Group.*

96th Brigade, R.G.A., Headquarters—

189 H.B., R.G.A.

202 „ „

378 S.B., „

394 „ „

## Generally speaking :

The Sub-Group was in support of the French.

The Right Group was in support of the 54th Division.

The Right Centre Group was in support of the 3rd (Lahore) Division.

The Left Centre Group was in support of the 75th Division.

The Left Group was in support of the 60th Division.

*Chaytor's Force* (Major-General Sir E. W. C. Chaytor).

Australian and New Zealand Mounted Division (less one squadron).

38th and 39th Battalions Royal Fusiliers.

20th Indian Brigade.

1st and 2nd Battalions British West Indies Regiment.

One Battery (six 18-pdrs.) 263rd Brigade R.F.A.

195th Heavy Battery, R.G.A.

29th and 32nd (Indian) Mountain Batteries.

## CHAPTER VIII

### PURSUIT TO DAMASCUS AND ALEPPO

1. *Operations of Chaytor's Force.*—The advance to Amman—Capture of Maan force.

2. *The Advance to Damascus.*—Action at Semakh—Operations of 4th Cavalry Division—Action at Jisr Benat Yakub—The capture of Damascus.

3. *The Advance to Aleppo.*—Advance to Beirut—Capture of Aleppo—Conclusion of armistice.

(SEE MAPS XVI., XVII., XX.)

#### 1. *Operations of Chaytor's Force*

CHAYTOR'S force in the Jordan Valley (Anzac Mounted Division, 20th Indian Infantry Brigade, two battalions West India Regiment, two battalions of Jews) had been given the tasks of occupying the attention of the Turkish Fourth Army and preventing any transference of troops to the west of the Jordan, of protecting the right flank of the XX. Corps when the latter went forward, and of advancing to Jisr ed Damieh, and then to Es Salt and Amman, when the Turks in the Jordan Valley weakened. All these missions were precisely discharged by General Chaytor.

During the first three days of the battle the Fourth Army made no move. Active demonstrations by Chaytor's Force left the Turkish commander uncertain of the British intentions, and news of the *débâcle* west of the Jordan reached him slowly. He did not begin his retreat till the 22nd, and still hoped to be able to await the arrival at Amman of the II. Corps, which was withdrawing from Maan and other posts on the Hejaz Railway. In truth, he had already delayed too long for the safety of his army.\* Feisal's Arabs

\* Liman von Sanders ("*Fünf Jahre in Türkei*") says that he warned the Fourth Army on September 20th to make good its retreat at once, and that he issued definite orders to that effect on the 21st, but that Djemal still delayed, loath to abandon the II. Corps.

were between him and Deraa, the railway was cut, and the whole countryside was rising against the Turks.

The New Zealand Mounted Brigade advanced north on the west bank of the Jordan during September 21st, meeting with opposition, but making steady progress. Very early on the 22nd it succeeded in getting astride the Nablus—Jisr ed Damieh road, after a sharp fight. A few hours later, with the support of a West Indian battalion, it occupied the bridge itself. It was now evident that the Fourth Army was in retreat, and orders were issued for the pursuit. For the third and last time the Anzacs advanced on Es Salt and Amman. The New Zealanders occupied Es Salt on the evening of the 23rd. Amman was taken by 4.30 p.m. on the 25th, after a stiff fight with the Turkish rearguards.

Chaytor now received orders to halt at Amman and to intercept the retreat of the II. Corps from Maan. The Fourth Army was already doomed and could be left to its fate. Few of its troops survived its unhappy march to Damascus, over many waterless miles, with the Arab forces across its path and the whole countryside rising bitterly and cruelly against the Turk. Some of those few who did struggle to Damascus were, as we shall see, overtaken and overwhelmed in the Barada Gorge, just north of the town.

The II. Corps was reported on the evening of the 25th some thirty miles south of Amman. Chaytor sent one brigade north on the 26th to occupy the Wadi el Hammam, the only water supply available to the enemy should he succeed in slipping past Amman. He sent another brigade south to gain touch with the enemy, and he kept his third brigade just east of Amman, where the Indian infantry brigade was posted. On the 28th the Turks reached Ziza, about twenty miles south of Amman. The commander of the advanced regiment of Chaytor's southern brigade (the 2nd A.L.H. Brigade) now entered into negotiation with the Turkish commander, explaining to him the hopelessness of his situation and requiring his surrender. The Turks were willing enough to surrender, but unwilling to lay down their arms until the British force was large enough to protect them from the hordes of savage Bedouin who surrounded

them. The other two regiments of the 2nd A.L.H. Brigade came up just before dark, but, as the attitude of the Arabs was still threatening and their numbers large, joined forces with the Turks, who were allowed to keep their arms. British and Turks together held a line of defence round the station and kept off the Arabs during the night.\* Next morning the Turks, over four thousand strong, were marched to Amman as prisoners.

This completed Chaytor's operations. His force had taken about 11,000 prisoners and fifty-seven guns. The Anzac Mounted Division here ended a very fine fighting record. It had taken a gallant part in practically every engagement since the E.E.F. had set out from the Canal two and a half years previously.

## *2. The Advance to Damascus*

The Australian Mounted Division was ordered on September 24th to advance to Semakh and Tiberias, so as to place the Desert Mounted Corps on the front Tiberias—Nazareth—Acre, the natural strategic and tactical line north of the Plain of Esdraelon. This advance of the Australians led to the most fiercely-fought action of the whole pursuit.

Liman von Sanders, on leaving Nazareth after his narrow escape from the 13th Brigade, had issued orders for the occupation of a defensive line down the Yarmuk Valley from Deraa to Semakh, and thence west of the Sea of Galilee by Tiberias to Lake Huleh. The Fourth Army was to establish itself between Deraa and Irbid, the Seventh Army from Irbid to Semakh, and the remains of the Eighth Army, together with the garrison of Haifa, between Semakh and Lake Huleh. The intention of the enemy Commander-in-Chief was to rally and reorganise his forces on these positions and to obtain time to prepare the defence of Damascus. The only criticism to be made of his orders is that they were quite impossible to execute, since the rate of progress of the British forces and of the disintegration of the Turkish armies

\* These were none of Feisal's men, but Bedouin of the Beni Sakhr tribe, who had failed so signally to co-operate at the time of the second raid east of Jordan (see Chapter VI.).

were both in advance of what Liman von Sanders knew or supposed. His orders, in fact, never even reached the Seventh or Eighth Armies. But as he passed through Semakh on his way to Damascus he issued very definite instructions for the defence of that place, which he regarded as the essential link between the two main sectors of the line on which his armies were to rally. He left a number of German machine-gunners to assure an obstinate resistance, and entrusted the command of the garrison to a German officer. The encounter of an Australian Light Horse regiment, full of confidence and determination, with a desperate but also determined German rearguard produced a stern little action.

The 4th A.L.H. Brigade, detailed for the attack on Semakh, was under Brig.-General W. Grant, who had led the charge at Beersheba. He had immediately available at the time only one complete regiment, the 11th A.L.H., and one squadron of another. The force marched on Semakh by night and approached the enemy defences by moonlight on September 25th, shortly before dawn broke. The leading squadrons, on being received by machine-gun fire, unhesitatingly formed line and charged, in the dark and against an unknown position. They reached the village and station buildings, but not without considerable losses, especially in horses. They then dismounted. A fierce struggle at close range followed, for the enemy still held the substantial stone houses of the railway station and other points of vantage. But soon after dawn the Australians rushed in and cleared out the Turks and Germans by hand-to-hand fighting. The Australian losses in officers and men were 17 killed and 61 wounded,\* and in horses nearly a hundred killed and wounded. They killed a hundred of the enemy and took 350 prisoners, of whom 150 were Germans. It was a grim little fight, of which the Australians are justly proud.

After clearing Semakh, Grant sent a squadron towards Tiberias along the lake road. It approached the town at about the same time as a squadron with an armoured car

\* The Australian division's casualties in all other engagements from September 19th to October 2nd, were 7 killed and 42 wounded.

battery from the 3rd A.L.H. Brigade at Nazareth. The garrison of Tiberias made little resistance, and soon surrendered.

Meanwhile Allenby issued orders on the morning of the 26th for the advance on Damascus. Chauvel's orders to Desert Mounted Corps were issued the same evening. Barrow, with the 4th Cavalry Division, was to move *via* Irbid on Deraa. If he failed to intercept the Turkish Fourth Army there, he was to follow it up along the ancient Pilgrims' Road and the Hejaz Railway to Damascus. The Australian Division from about Tiberias, followed by MacAndrew's 5th Cavalry Division, which was concentrating round Nazareth, was to make for Damascus by the direct road round the north end of Lake Tiberias and through Kuneitra (the old caravan route to Syria from Judæa and Egypt). The divisions were to move light and were to subsist on local supplies. Practically the whole of the transport, except ammunition wagons and ambulances, was left behind. The distances to Damascus were : 140 miles for the 4th Division, which was accordingly given one day's start, and 90 miles for the remainder. These two widely-separated columns eventually reached Damascus within an hour or so of each other and well up to their appointed time.

The 4th Division moved from about Beisan on the 26th, and its leading brigade had a fight at Irbid late that afternoon with the flank guard of the Fourth Army, the main body of which was by now passing Er Remte. The country round Irbid was difficult and the enemy was strongly posted. The 2nd Lancers made an attempt to take the position by a mounted attack, but the ground and the circumstances were too unfavourable to allow the regiment to repeat its success of a week earlier at Megiddo. Moreover, the Turks of the Fourth Army, though retreating, had not yet been heavily engaged, and were not to be hustled out of a strong position in this summary fashion. The charge failed, with severe losses, and when dark came the Turks still held their ground. They withdrew from Irbid during the night and made a stand on the 27th at Er Remte, whence they were driven in some confusion by the 10th Brigade, but only after considerable fighting. The 4th Division halted for



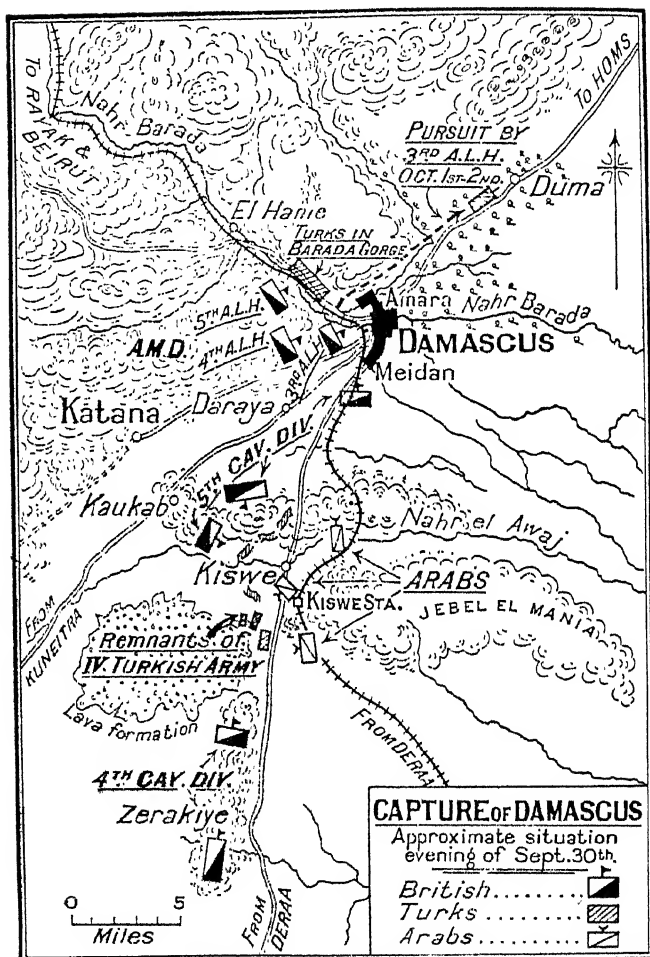
the night at Er Remte, and reached Deraa early next morning, the 28th, to find it already occupied by a detachment of Feisal's Arabs.

The Arab army had been worrying at the flank of the Fourth Army ever since it began its retreat from Amman, and had killed and captured many Turks and some Germans. On the 27th the main Arab fighting force cut in at Sheikh Saad between the bulk of the Fourth Army and Damascus, and made many prisoners.

On the same day a force of Turks and Germans retreating from in front of Barrow butchered the inhabitants of an Arab village north of Mezerib. News of this outrage reached Lawrence and the Arabs, who were close at hand, and they at once exacted a stern penalty, not a man of the column responsible for the crime being allowed to escape.

The 4th Cavalry Division now took up a direct pursuit towards Damascus, with the Arabs hanging on to the right flank of such Turkish forces as were still in being between Deraa and Damascus.

In the meantime the advance on the northern line was also moving forward, though not without opposition and delays. The Australian Mounted Division began its march for Damascus early on September 27th. About midday the leading troops reached the crossing of the Jordan at Jisr Benat Yakub ("the bridge of the daughters of Jacob"). The enemy had destroyed the stone bridge and had placed a strong rearguard, with numerous German machine gunners, on the opposite bank. Their fire swept the open approaches to the bridge and to a ford south of it. It was a place where a small detachment might well impose serious delay on a more numerous force, since the river is swift and deep and the banks are steep. The French Spahi Regiment of the 5th A.L.H. Brigade was detailed to work down towards the bridge and to endeavour to force a passage there, while the remainder of the brigade sought for a ford to the south. The 3rd A.L.H. Brigade went north, to seek a passage at the south end of Lake Huleh, where it was reported fordable for mounted men. The report proved false, but part of the brigade succeeded in crossing the river between Lake Huleh



MAP XX.

and the bridge as darkness fell. South of the bridge the 5th Brigade had swum the river in the afternoon, but had found the ground on the eastern bank so rocky and difficult that it was dark before they could get at the flank of the enemy holding the bridge. Attacked on both flanks, the Turco-German rearguard withdrew hastily at nightfall, partly in lorries, losing a number of prisoners.

The delay was not ended when the enemy was driven off. The repair of the bridge was only completed on the afternoon of the 28th, so that the bulk of the two divisions—the 5th Cavalry Division had now closed up to the Australians—had to cross by rough and difficult fords. They got no further than Kuneitra by the night of the 28th, and were still forty miles from Damascus.

The advance from Kuneitra was not resumed till the afternoon of the 29th.\* The intention was to march all night, so as to be close to Damascus next morning. But just before dark the enemy were found holding a strong position on a ridge south of Sasa. After some confused fighting in the darkness they retired, leaving three guns and a hundred or so of prisoners in our hands.

On the morning of September 30th—the last day of Turkish rule in Damascus—the situation to the south of the town was as follows. On the Deraa road (the Pilgrims' road to Mecca) the bulk of the remnants of the Fourth Army had outpaced Barrow's division, the advanced troops of which were still thirty miles from Damascus. These remnants were in two main bodies, of which the first, consisting of the residue of the Turkish cavalry division and some infantry, was approaching Kiswe, ten miles south of Damascus. The other and larger portion was some miles behind, with the Arabs still close on its flank and rear. On the Kuneitra road the Turkish rearguard had taken up a position to make their last stand against the Australians between Kaukab and Katana, about ten miles from Damascus and five miles west of Kiswe.

\* The artillery and transport had been delayed at the river crossing and had marched all the previous night. They did not reach Kuneitra till the morning of the 29th.

In Damascus itself there were still many thousands of the enemy, some of whom were stragglers from the disasters in Palestine, exhausted and half-starved, and some were fresh troops hurried in from Aleppo and Beirut when it was still hoped to defend the town. Two roads to the north were available for such of these as still had the power and the will to escape. The road to Homs ("Darb es Sultani"—the "royal road") leaves the town to the north-east and runs along the edge of the desert. The other road, to Rayak and Beirut, runs north-west through the great gorge of the River Barada (the "Abana" of the Bible). The railway also follows this route. Road and railway are confined by high cliffs to a defile less than one hundred yards broad. During the 30th both the Homs road and the Beirut road were crowded with columns of retreating Turks. Within the city Turkish rule ceased during the day; Arab flags were openly hoisted, and the government was assumed by a committee of Arab notables.\*

The British dispositions on the morning of the 30th were as follows. The Australian Division was to brush aside any opposition on the Kuneitra road, to pass round the west of Damascus, and to block the Beirut and Homs roads. The 5th Cavalry Division was to cut across to the Deraa Road and to intercept the remains of the Fourth Army about Kiswe. The 4th Cavalry Division was to continue its march on Damascus and to co-operate with the 5th Cavalry Division in disposing of any Turks left south of Damascus.

The 5th Cavalry Division and the leading brigade of the 4th completed the dispersal of the two fragments of the Fourth Army, and captured the greater part of them. Only one formed body—a German battalion—and small parties of stragglers reached Damascus from the south this day. The details of the fighting are confused and are of no particular interest. At nightfall the 5th Cavalry Division was

\* Liman von Sanders had placed Ali Riza Pasha, an Arab who held General's rank in the Turkish army, in charge of the arrangements to resist the British advance on the Kuneitra road, ignorant that Ali Riza had in fact long been chairman of the secret committee pledged to assume the control of Damascus on the overthrow of the Turks.

just north of Kiswe, and the 4th Cavalry Division some miles to the south of it.

The Australian Division on the Kuneitra road overcame the resistance of the Turkish rearguard at Kaukab before noon. Shaken by the fire of two batteries, and disturbed by a turning movement to the north, the enemy fled so soon as two A.L.H. regiments were launched against the position in a mounted attack. The 5th A.L.H. Brigade now made for the Beirut road, followed by the 3rd A.L.H. Brigade, which had orders to pass round by the north and to get astride the Homs road. These orders could not be executed, since no way could be found down the cliffs of the Barada Gorge. It was therefore impossible to reach the Homs road without passing through the city itself, and this had been forbidden. Troops of both the 3rd and 5th Brigades arrived at the cliffs above the Beirut road and looked down on a crowded mass of fugitives in the defile. Since there was no other means of stopping them, the Australians opened machine-gun fire on the head of the column. A terrible slaughter followed, till the Turks at the rear of the column realised that their escape was barred and turned back into the city.

At dawn next morning, October 1st, the 3rd A.L.H. Brigade, which had now received permission to enter the city, passed through on its way to the Homs road. These were the first of the British forces to enter Damascus. Soon afterwards Lawrence and his Arabs arrived, closely followed by the leading troops of the 5th Cavalry Division. The 3rd A.L.H. Brigade had meanwhile hurried through the town and down the Homs road in pursuit of the enemy column which had left the previous evening. During the whole day they were engaged in skirmishing with enemy rearguards, and they captured 750 prisoners and a number of machine guns. Next day they rode down another Turkish column and took 1,500 prisoners, 3 guns and 26 machine guns. This was the last engagement near Damascus and the last fight of the Australians in the campaign.

In Damascus itself the remainder of the Australian Division had collected some 12,000 weary, diseased and dispirited Turks. With those already taken, the number of prisoners

at Damascus amounted to some 20,000. The feeding of this multitude, most of whom were sick and practically all of whom were exhausted, presented a difficult problem. Moreover, the Turkish medical arrangements had completely broken down, and the hospitals were in a shocking condition, full of dead and dying Turks, who had straggled to Damascus and could go no further. The administration of the city had been for political reasons handed over to the Arabs. Their leaders did the best they could, but they were inexperienced and their task was a heavy one. There were some few days of disorder and friction before life in Damascus could be restored to the comparatively normal.

### *3. The Advance to Aleppo and Conclusion of the Armistice*

Of the whole of the Turkish armies in Palestine and Syria, which had had a ration strength of over 100,000 on September 19th, only some 17,000 escaped north, and of these it was estimated that not more than 4,000 were effective rifles. The hostile forces in Northern Syria were in fact a mere rabble, without artillery, without transport and without organisation. They could offer little obstacle to the occupation of Aleppo and of the rest of Syria, which the War Cabinet urged on General Allenby immediately after the fall of Damascus. But the problem of supplying even a small force so far ahead would obviously be a difficult one. Damascus was already 150 miles from the bases of the army, and Aleppo was 200 miles beyond Damascus. As a first step General Allenby decided to advance to the line Rayak—Beirut. The occupation of the port of Beirut would give a shorter line of supply inland by the road and railway to Damascus. The cavalry were to occupy Rayak, while an infantry division marched up the coast to Beirut.

The 7th Meerut Division had already marched to Haifa, which it reached on October 1st. Leaving Haifa on October 3rd, it marched over the Ladder of Tyre (where a road had to be cut through this famous headland) and by Tyre and Sidon to Beirut, which it reached on October 8th. It had already been forestalled by French warships and by armoured cars from Rayak and Zahle, which the 4th and 5th

Cavalry Divisions had occupied on October 6th without opposition. The Australian Mounted Division had been left to secure Damascus.

The next stage was to the line Homs—Tripoli, which places were connected by a passably good metalled road.\*

Malaria and influenza, which had already laid their grip on the Australians at Damascus, had by now quite immobilised the 4th Cavalry Division, so that the 5th Cavalry Division had to make the advance from the Rayak area to Aleppo unsupported except by an Arab force under Sherif Nasir. From Baalbek onwards General MacAndrew organised his force into two columns, a day's march apart. The leading column ("A" column) comprised three armoured-car batteries, three light-car patrols and the 15th Brigade (two regiments only). The Division reached Homs on October 16th, and there found Nasir's Arabs, who had marched by the direct route from Damascus. Meantime the XXI. Corps cavalry regiment and some armoured cars had occupied Tripoli on October 13th and had secured that line of supply for the cavalry. A brigade of the 7th Division reached Tripoli a few days later.

The advance to Aleppo was now ordered. It was a bold order, in spite of the demoralisation of the enemy. Aleppo was still 120 miles from Homs, and General MacAndrew's small force would be quite out of range of support by the rest of the army. His division was much reduced by sickness, and his regiments numbered only a total of 1,500 sabres. He had also two R.H.A. batteries, three armoured car batteries, three light-car patrols and a squadron of the R.A.F. The enemy forces at and around Aleppo were known to amount to 20,000, though less than half of these were believed to be combatants.

The bridge over the Orontes at Er Rastan was repaired on the 20th and "A" column (armoured cars and 15th Brigade) reached a point five miles north of Hama on the 21st. On the 22nd the armoured cars encountered an enemy rearguard in lorries at Khan Sebil, half-way to Aleppo.

\* In 1914 there had been a railway between the two places, but the Turks had removed the rails for use elsewhere.

After a running fight of fifteen miles they captured an armoured car and two lorries. Next day the cars got within a few miles of Aleppo, and General MacAndrew sent in a summons to surrender the city. This summons met with refusal. October 24th and 25th were spent in reconnoitring the enemy positions south of Aleppo preparatory to action when the 15th Brigade arrived. It came up on the 25th, and an attack on Aleppo was planned for the 26th in conjunction with Nasir's Arab force, which had been advancing further east, along the line of the railway. The 15th Brigade was to work round west of Aleppo and on to the Alexandretta road, the armoured cars were to attack from the south and the Arabs from the east.

During the evening of the 25th, however, the Arabs managed to enter Aleppo, which was of course full of sympathisers with the Arab cause. They inflicted heavy casualties on the Turks in hand-to-hand fighting in the streets and compelled the garrison to withdraw. General MacAndrew entered the town with the armoured cars at 10 a.m. on the 26th. On the same morning a strong Turkish column retiring north of Aleppo by the Alexandretta road was charged by the two regiments of the 15th Brigade, the Jodhpur and Mysore Lancers. The charge was at first successful, but later the enemy, who numbered about 3,000, discovered the weakness of the attackers and rallied. Our cavalry had to withdraw and to take up a defensive attitude. In the evening the Turks continued their retreat.

General MacAndrew's force was too weak to advance any further. It was, in fact, only his bold handling of the troops available that had caused the Turkish commander to overestimate his strength and to evacuate Aleppo.\* In order to enable Alexandretta and other points north of Aleppo to be occupied, the Australian Mounted Division was ordered up from Damascus. It left Damascus on October 27th and was within a short distance of Homs, when the armistice

\* From enemy accounts it would appear that the lorry columns bringing up supplies from Tripoli were reported as carrying British infantry to reinforce the cavalry.



between the Allies and Turkey was concluded on October 31st, three years almost to a day since Turkey had entered the war.\*

Between September 19th and October 26th the E.E.F. had captured 360 guns and 75,000 prisoners, of whom 200 officers and 3,500 other ranks were Germans or Austrians. Our battle casualties in the whole period were 5,666.† The front had been moved forward over 350 miles, and the 5th Cavalry Division had actually covered well over 500 miles during the thirty-eight days of operations, losing only 21 per cent. of its horses.

\* It took longer to conclude peace than war with Turkey. The still-born Treaty of Sevres was signed on August 10th, 1920. The Treaty of Lausanne, which replaced it, was signed three years later, on July 24th, 1923. So far as the British Empire was concerned, this treaty still left open the important Mosul question, the decision of which was given by the League of Nations on December 16th, 1925. The actual delimitation of the Iraq frontier as the result of this decision was completed in 1927.

† XXI. Corps 3,500, XX. Corps 1,500, Desert Mounted Corps 650.

# FINALE

## CHAPTER IX

### LESSONS OF THE CAMPAIGNS

1. *The Value of Mobility*.—The exploits of the cavalry—Possibilities of mechanised forces—The elements of mobility.

2. *Other Lessons*.—Strategy and Policy—Surprise—The value of training.

#### 1. *The Value of Mobility*

“Mobility implies the power to manœuvre and act with rapidity, and is the chief means of effecting surprise.”—(Field Service Regulations.)

The military text-books of 2,500 years ago put the same principle in a chattier style :—

“Lord Wen said : ‘What is of first importance in operations of war ?’ Wu answered and said : ‘Lightness . . . if the men be free to move, the fight prospers.’ ”—(“The Book of War”—Chinese, fifth century B.C.)

THE Palestine campaigns have been acclaimed as a triumph for cavalry and as the vindication of that arm in modern war. And quite certainly the skilful use of the mounted arm is the outstanding feature of the operations. But the true lesson is not so much the value of the horseman as the value and power of mobility, however achieved.

The campaigns are a classic illustration of this power, and are well worth careful study for this reason alone, since the chief aim of military thought at the present time must be to recapture the power of movement and manœuvre, which was lost in the principal operations of the late war in Western Europe.

Let us briefly recapitulate some of the strategical and tactical feats of the mounted arm in these campaigns. At Magdhaba a mounted division made a night march of twenty

miles, surprised and overwhelmed a strongly posted enemy detachment, and then returned over twenty miles to its base, all in less than thirty hours. At Rafa a very similar operation as regards both distance and time was carried out with equal success. At the First battle of Gaza and again at Beersheba the mounted troops by their mobility were able to reach the rear of the enemy's position and to attack it from a quite unexpected direction. Their pursuit after the Third battle of Gaza was not decisive for reasons which have been given in the chapter dealing with those operations, though it caused the Turkish army to fall back seventy-five miles with heavy loss and in disorganisation. In the first advance on Jerusalem and in the two raids east of the Jordan, Allenby's horsemen showed that even the roughest of hills and the most trying conditions of weather could not immobilise them. Their crowning exploit in the battles of Megiddo is probably the most striking example of the power of the cavalry arm in the whole history of war. In the opening phase of this operation one division covered 70 miles in 34 hours. Finally, the sustained pursuit to Damascus and Aleppo is remarkable by reason of the distances covered, even though the opposition was not very formidable. The 5th Cavalry Division, for instance, marched nearly six hundred miles in thirty-eight consecutive days.\*

The best idea of the power conferred by this mobility perhaps can be got by comparing the time that an infantry force would have taken to perform the same tasks. Thus to reach Magdhaba or Rafa in the heavy going of the Sinai Desert would have been an exhausting day's march for infantry. When the infantry had arrived, it would have

\* For absolute mobility—intangibility, in fact—the Arab raiding forces under Lawrence were unsurpassable, but they were not, of course, and were not meant to be, a formidable fighting force.

"The necessary speed and range were attained by the extreme frugality of the desert men and their efficiency when mounted on their she riding camels. . . . We had no system of supply; each man was self-contained and carried on the saddle from the sea-base at which the raid started six weeks' food for himself. The six weeks' ration for ordinary men was a half bag of flour, forty-five pounds in weight. . . . In the heat of summer Arabian camels will do about 250 miles comfortably between drinks; and this represented three days' vigorous marching." ("The Evolution of a Revolt," *Army Quarterly*, October, 1920.)

taken them two hours and more to encircle the enemy position; a preliminary to the main assault which the horsemen were able to carry out at the gallop in a very short time. Infantry would have had little remaining energy for a hard fight, while the return march would probably have been altogether beyond their powers without a day's rest.

Again, the move from Khalasa and Asluj to the north of Beersheba, made by the mounted troops during the hours of darkness, preparatory to capturing Beersheba by daylight, would have meant two days' marching for infantry. And in their great ride to the rear of the Turkish armies in the Plain of Esdrælon the cavalry covered in twenty-four hours three long infantry marches. Further, the remaining energy and capacity for action of well-trained cavalry who have ridden forty or fifty miles is greater than that of infantry who have marched twenty or twenty-five miles.

The above are examples of the strategical use of the mounted arm. Of its tactical use on the battlefield the campaign also provides many remarkable instances. The charges at Beersheba, at El Mughar and elsewhere are notable demonstrations of the dictum that "speed is armour," and show that, provided there is no natural obstacle to stop it, a mounted attack may get home by sheer speed where an infantry attack would be slow and costly.

On the other hand, the experience of the campaign shows very clearly that mobility may lose much of its value unless it be coupled with adequate fire power. The weakness of cavalry formations in fire power very nearly proved fatal at Magdhaba, at Rafa, and again at Beersheba, where the long delay caused by the resistance at Tel es Saba almost gave the Turkish garrison the time to destroy the wells and then to escape.

Now consider whether a mechanised force could have carried out even more expeditiously and with less loss what the cavalry accomplished in Palestine. It is usually a profitless speculation to re-fight past battles or campaigns with more modern weapons, since their presence on the one side would have modified the strategy or tactics on the other side and would have brought forth counter-measures. It is,

however, well worth while to consider what would have been the relative powers and the limitations of a force carried in mechanical vehicles instead of on horses, in the conditions of this, the most mobile campaign of the late war.

It is, of course, quite obvious that a mechanised force has great advantages over cavalry in the matter of fire power and protection. Provided they could have been brought to the field of battle at the right time, there can be no question that armoured fighting vehicles could have achieved victory more surely and effectively than did the cavalry. The issue could not have hung so long in the balance either at Magdhaba, or at Rafa or at Beersheba, had even a few tanks been available, or had mechanisation enabled heavier weapons than the 13-pdr. to support the mounted troops. Nor would a mechanised force have been so checked and disorganised by the lack of water in the pursuit subsequent to the Gaza—Beersheba battle as were the mounted troops, so that the destruction of the Turkish armies might well have been accomplished in 1917 instead of in 1918, had a mechanised force been available.

On the other hand, there are three factors which might have impaired the mobility or limited the usefulness of mechanised forces in the campaigns under consideration. The first of these is, naturally, the influence of the terrain. This was, on the whole, distinctly favourable. The Sinai desert would not have permitted manœuvre to any form of mechanical transport at present devised, but much of Palestine and Syria is almost ideal for the action of a mechanised force—open rolling plains with few obstacles. The maritime plain of Palestine, the Plain of Sharon, the Plain of Esdraelon, the country between Deraa and Damascus, the level plateau by Homs and Hama to Aleppo, all these are suitable fields for the movement and manœuvre of mechanical vehicles. The armoured cars and light-car patrols working with the mounted troops did most valuable work in these areas.\* But the Judæan Hills, and the Mountains of Moab are, on the other

\* See, for instance, pp. 85, 97-99, 209, 211, 226-227, 234-285, 288-292 of Preston's "Desert Mounted Corps."

hand, almost impracticable for the manoeuvre of mechanical vehicles.\*

A mechanised force could not have participated in the first advance on Jerusalem, nor in the capture of Jericho, nor in the two raids east of the Jordan, as the cavalry did. Again had a mechanised force been available for the operation against the Turkish communications in the final battle, the passage of the mountain spur between Sharon and Esdrælon would have been even more critical for it than it was for the cavalry. A force capable of fighting on its feet would certainly have been required to force the passes if held by the enemy, and to secure them while the column of vehicles wound through the defiles, the roads in which would have required improvement by a detachment of R.E. There was no way round this obstacle of the mountain range, except by the narrow passage between the sea and the foot of Mount Carmel—itself a defile. The Carmel spur in fact constitutes an obstacle easily blocked against a mechanised force. Such obstacles and defiles will in the future, as mechanical forces become common, acquire great tactical and strategical importance. The existence of this obstacle might, for instance, so profoundly have influenced and modified the British plan as to cause the movement against the Turkish rear to be made not along the Coastal Plain, but up the narrow Jordan Valley—a less advantageous route in every way except that it avoids the passage of the Carmel spur.

A second factor which may limit the action of mechanised forces in their present state of development is the question of supply and repairs. The cavalry, as has been related, were able to live very largely on the country during the pursuit to Damascus and Aleppo, and the wastage of horse-flesh was comparatively small. The requirements of petrol for a mechanised force, and the replacement and repair of machines, would have been a more serious matter and would have demanded very careful organisation, or the force would have been brought to a halt long before it reached Aleppo.

\* The problem really dates right back to Biblical times, when the war chariots of the Egyptians, Philistines, and Assyrians controlled the issue of battles in the plains, but were powerless in the Judæan Hills, a land of foot warfare.

It is most important to realise how greatly dependent mobility is on the efficiency of the communications. This was a point which General Allenby never forgot, and the thorough preparation of his communications before each of his great advances should be carefully studied and noted. Possibly, in the future, the supply by air of petrol, rations and other essentials may become practicable, but the problem of the repair of mechanical vehicles at a distance from their base will always be a difficult one.

The third problem is this : how would a small mechanised force, though greatly superior in fighting power to a mass of cavalry, have been able to deal with the multitude of the Turkish prisoners ? It is a problem that may puzzle a mechanised force some day.

To sum up, the campaigns show the great power which cavalry exercised by their mobility. How much more formidable, then, will be the power exercised by a mechanised force, with its much heavier weight of fire, its longer range and higher speed, and furnished, as it would be, with the protective armour which cavalry were for all practical purposes forced to discard four hundred years ago ? In the eternal duel between weapons and armour which the invention of the tank has again raised it is possible, even likely, that the weight of armour necessary to resist the weapons carried by the foot soldier will become excessive, and that mechanical fighting vehicles will eventually be forced to rely on speed rather than on armour. If so, the experiences of these campaigns show the value of speed on the battlefield in producing results and in saving casualties.\*

A mechanised force will always be more susceptible to the influence of the ground than cavalry, just as cavalry is more susceptible than infantry. Features which form obstacles or defiles to a mechanised force will assume great tactical importance in theatres where such forces are operating. And as a corollary to this, a mechanised force will often require the co-operation of a force capable of

\* Speed is, unfortunately, a most expensive commodity ; alike in battleships, motor cars, racehorses and women, a comparatively small increase in speed may double the price of the article.

fighting on foot, able to force and secure tactical features which deny freedom of manœuvre to mechanical vehicles. This will also solve the problem of handling large numbers of prisoners. Whether such a force should be cavalry mounted on horses or infantry carried in mechanical vehicles can be decided only by future experience. In the particular campaigns under review a combination of cavalry and mechanised force would have indeed been formidable. But this balancing of the proportion of mechanised forces to infantry and cavalry is a peculiarly difficult problem for the British Army, which must be prepared to adapt its organisation and equipment to theatres of war differing as widely as the rocky hills of the North-West Frontier of India, at one end of the scale, and the cultivated plains of Western Europe, with their network of roads, at the other.

Finally, whatever be the composition and equipment of the force by which the advantages of mobility are sought, two elements are necessary to attain it. One is a carefully-prepared system of supply, the second is the will and driving power of the leader. General Allenby devoted the greatest care to developing the communications in accordance with his strategical plan, so that the supply services were able to cope even with the rapidity of the advance to Damascus and Aleppo. The determination of the commander is the last and most indispensable element in mobility. It is well illustrated in these campaigns by the decision in November, 1917, to advance on Jerusalem at once, and by the maintenance of the pursuit to Damascus and Aleppo in the face of all difficulties. Though General Allenby took the greatest pains to ensure full and regular supplies, he refused to be daunted or distracted from his purpose by difficulties of supply. A sentence in his administrative instructions for the final advance is illuminating: "These calculations are based on the scale of full mobile rations. It may be necessary to double all distances and to place the force on half rations."

## *2. Other Lessons*

A tabulated list of the lessons of a campaign—each neatly labelled and tied to some principle of the Regulations—is of



little value, even to pass examinations, and no such list will be given here.

Attention has been called in the course of the narrative to those points in the strategy or in the actions of the campaigns which call for reflection and analysis. The following brief notes are intended only to emphasise what seem to the writer the salient points—apart from the outstanding lesson of mobility—of the warfare in Palestine and Syria.

The strategical dependence of these campaigns on political considerations as well as on events in the other theatres of war has been explained at some length in the preceding chapters, since without some understanding of this the strategy in Palestine would appear inexplicable. The conduct of our war against Turkey shows how objectives originally clear and simple may become clouded, and even lost to sight, in the turbid atmosphere of war councils. Our only real interest in the direction of Palestine was the safety of the Suez Canal, and in Iraq the protection of the Persian oil fields. Yet in 1918 two great armies, based on Egypt and on Basra respectively, almost the furthest points from the heart of Turkey that it would have been possible to select, were invading the Turkish Empire in unco-ordinated fashion. It is easy to criticise such strategy, but not so easy to find the correct alternative. It will form an interesting exercise for the reader of this history to determine for himself the time and line at which the E.E.F. might have halted and disposed itself finally for the defence of the Canal, and what the results of such a policy might have been.

The steps by which General Allenby in both his great battles against the Turk completely deceived his opponent as to his intentions and gained the great advantage of surprise have been indicated in the narrative, and are worth study. Mechanised forces, by their extreme mobility, will, of course, greatly increase the possibilities of surprise. It should be noted, too, that General Allenby never wasted the advantage of surprise by neglect of the principle of concentration. When he struck at his selected objective, he struck with overwhelming force. Witness the assembly

of three infantry divisions, with a fourth in reserve, and two mounted divisions against the Turkish garrison of Beersheba, and his great concentration against the Turkish right in the final battle.

Lastly, the value of training may be stressed. In France we never had, after the first year of war, any troops that were really well trained—judged by the pre-war standard. In Palestine, with the lower percentage of losses and the less continuous fighting, there was time available for training, and sufficient pre-war personnel capable of imparting instruction. Herein lies the explanation of how the infantry was able on many occasions to assault and capture strongly-fortified positions with no great weight of artillery behind it and without the aid of tanks.

A study of what well-trained troops, capable of manœuvre, were able to accomplish may serve as a corrective to the pessimism as to the offensive power of infantry which the experience of rigid trench warfare in France engendered in the minds of some.

The student of these campaigns who bears away with him the two lessons that mobility, which gives the power of surprise, should be the chief aim of the organisation of our Army, and that training, which gives the ability to manœuvre, will restore to infantry the offensive power on the battlefield which many in France believed it to have lost, will not have read them in vain.

# APPENDIX I

## OFFICIAL NAMES OF THE BATTLES AND ENGAGEMENTS OF THE CAMPAIGNS IN EGYPT, SINAI, PALESTINE AND SYRIA.

*(From the Report of the Battles Nomenclature Committee.)*

### EASTERN FRONTIER AND PALESTINE.

#### I.—THE DEFENCE OF EGYPT.

OPERATIONS.	BATTLES.		ACTIONS, &C.	MISCELLANEOUS INCIDENTS.	LIMITS.	
	NAME.	TACTICAL INCIDENTS INCLUDED.			CHRONOLOGICAL.	GEOGRAPHICAL.
Defence of the Suez Canal (26th Jan., 1915–12th Aug., 1916.)	...	...	Actions on the Suez Canal	...	3rd–4th Feb., 1915	East of the Suez Qantara Railway
			Affair of Qatia	...	23rd April, 1916	East of the Canal and north of El Ferdan Station.
	BATTLE OF RUMANI	...	...	...	4th–5th Aug., 1916	East of the Canal and north of Ismailia.
Operations in the Sinai Peninsula (15th Nov., 1916–9th Jan., 1917.)	...	...	Affair of Magdhaba	...	23rd Dec., 1916	South and east of Bir Lahfan.
			Action of Rafah	...	9th Jan., 1917	North and east of Sheikh Zowa'id.

#### II.—WESTERN FRONTIER.

Operations against the Senussi (23rd Nov., 1915–8th Feb., 1917.)	...	...	Affair of the Wadi Senab	...	11th–13th Dec., 1915	Area covered by the force under Lieut.-Col. Gordon.
			Affair of the Wadi Majid	...	25th Dec., 1915	Area covered by the two columns under Major-General A. Wallace.
			Affair of Halazin	...	23rd Jan., 1916	

WESTERN FRONTIER—*continued.*

OPERATIONS.	BATTLES.		ACTIONS, &c.	MISCELLANEOUS INCIDENTS.	LIMITS.	
	NAME.	TACTICAL INCIDENTS INCLUDED.			CHRONOLOGICAL.	GEOGRAPHICAL.
Operations against the Senussi— <i>continued.</i>	...	...	Action of Agagiya	...	26th Feb., 1916	Area covered by the force under Brigadier-General H. T. Lukin.
			Affairs in Dakhla Oasis	...	17th-22nd Oct., 1916	*
			Affairs near the Siwa Oasis	...	3rd-5th Feb., 1917	Siwa Oasis to Munasib.

## SUDAN.

Operations against the Sultan of Darfur (1st March-31st Dec., 1916.)	...	...	Affair of Beringiya	... — <i>with subsequent Occupation of El Fasher</i>	22nd May	*
					23rd May	*
			Affair of Gyuba	...	6th Nov.	*

## III.—THE INVASION OF PALESTINE.

The First Offensive (24th March-19th April, 1917.)	FIRST BATTLE OF GAZA	...	...	...	26th-27th March	North of the line Beersheba—Bela'.
	SECOND BATTLE OF GAZA	...	...	...	17th-19th April	
The Second Offensive (27th Oct.-16th Nov., 1917.)	THIRD BATTLE OF GAZA	Capture of Beersheba Capture of the Sheria Position	...	...	27th Oct.-7th Nov.	North of Wadi Ghuzze.
			Affair of Huj	...	8th Nov.	North of the line Beersheba—Gaza and west of the Beersheba—Jerusalem road.
			Action of El Mughar	...	13th Nov.	
			...	— <i>with subsequent Occupation of Junction Station</i>	14th Nov.	
Jerusalem Operations (17th Nov.-30th Dec., 1917.)	BATTLE OF NEBI SAMWIL.	...	...	...	17th-24th Nov.	North and east of the line Hebron—Junction Station.
	DEFENCE OF JERUSALEM	...	Capture of Jerusalem	...	7th-9th Dec.	
				...	26th-30th Dec.	

III.—THE INVASION OF PALESTINE—*continued.*

OPERATIONS.	BATTLES.		ACTIONS, &C.	MISCELLANEOUS INCIDENTS.	LIMITS.	
	NAME.	TACTICAL INCIDENTS INCLUDED.			CHRONOLOGICAL.	GEOGRAPHICAL.
Jerusalem Operations— <i>continued.</i>	<i>—with subsidiary</i> BATTLE OF JAFFA	...	...	...	21st–22nd Dec.	Between the Tul—Keram—Junction Station—Jaffa railway and the sea
Operations in and beyond the Jordan Valley (19th Feb.–4th May, 1918.)	...	...	Capture of Jericho	...	19th–21st Feb.	Between the Bethlehem—Nablus road and the Jordan, north of the line Jerusalem—Dead Sea.
			Passage of the Jordan	...	21st–23rd March	East of the Jordan.
			First Action of Es Salt	...	24th–25th March	
			First Attack on Amman	...	27th–30th March	
			Turkish Attack on the Jordan Bridge-heads	...	11th April	
			Second Action of Es Salt	...	30th April–4th May	
<i>—with subsidiary</i> Arab Operations Mountains of Moab (March and April, 1918.)	...	...	...	...	March and April	
Local Operations. 1918	...	...	Actions of Tel Asur	...	8th–12th March	West of the Jordan, and north of the line—Jericho Ram Ailah—Jaffa.
			Affair of Abu Telul	...	14th July	*
The Final Offensive (18th Sept.–31st Oct., 1918.)	THE BATTLES OF MEGIDDO	...	...	...	19th–25th Sept.	Between the Hejaz Railway and the sea, north of the line Dhaba Station—mouth of Jordan—Arsuf.
	(I.) BATTLE OF SHARON	...	...	...	19th–25th Sept.	
	(II.) BATTLE OF NABLUS	...	...	...	23rd–30th Sept.	
			Actions beyond Jordan	...	25th Sept.	
			Capture of Amman	...	27th Sept.	
			Capture of Dera'a *	...		

\* Arab forces.

III.—THE INVASION OF PALESTINE—*continued.*

OPERATIONS.	BATTLES.		ACTIONS, &C.	MISCELLANEOUS INCIDENTS.	LIMITS.	
	NAME.	TACTICAL INCIDENTS INCLUDED.			CHRONOLOGICAL.	GEOGRAPHICAL.
The Final Offensive— <i>continued.</i> — <i>including</i> The Pursuit through Syria (26th Sept.—31st Oct.)	...	...	Capture of Damascus Affair of Haritan	... — <i>with subsequent</i> Occupation of Aleppo	1st Oct. 26th Oct. 26th Oct.	North of the Haifa—Dera'a railway

## IV.—HEJAZ.

The Arab Revolt (June-Dec., 1916.)	...	...	Attack on Medina Capture of Jidda Capture of Mecca Capture of Yenbo Capture of Taif	... ... ... ... ...	6th June 9th June 10th June 27th July 22nd Sept.	* * * * *
Operations against the Hejaz Railway (Oct., 1916—Nov., 1918.)	...	...	...	...	Oct., 1916—Nov., 1918	From Ma'an to Medina.
Wejeh Operations (Jan., 1917.)	...	...	Capture of Wejeh	...	24th Jan.	Yenbo.
Aqaba Operations (6th May—21st Oct., 1917.)	...	...	Affair of Aba el Lissan	...	3rd July	*
			Turkish Attack on Petra	Occupat on of Aqaba	6th July	Between the Hejaz Railway and the Wadi Araba.
				...	21st Oct.	
Tafile Operations (Jan.—March, 1918.)	...	...	Actions for Et Tafile	...	1st—28th Jan.	Between the Hejaz Railway and the Wadi Araba.
				Seizure of the Turkish Dead Sea Flotilla	27th Jan.	El Mezra'a.
Maan Operations (April—Sept., 1918.)	...	...	Affair of Shahim Station Affair of Mudawara Station	... ...	20th April 6th Aug.	* *
				Evacuation of Ma'an	23rd Sept.	*

*Note.*—The operations of the Arab forces which co-operated with the British Army in their operations beyond Jordan and in the final offensive in Syria have been included under EGYPT AND PALESTINE.

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## V.—SOUTHERN ARABIA.

OPERATIONS.	BATTLES.		ACTIONS, &C.	MISCELLANEOUS INCIDENTS.	LIMITS.	
	NAME.	TACTICAL INCIDENTS INCLUDED.			CHRONOLOGICAL.	GEOGRAPHICAL.
Operations in the Bab el Mandeb (1914-15.)	...	...	Capture of Sheikh Sa'id Turkish Attack on Perim	...	10th Nov., 1914	Sheikh Sa'id Peninsula.
	...	...		...	14th-15th June, 1915	Perim Island (Troops under the command of Captain H. A. C. Hutchinson).
Defence of Aden (3rd July, 1915-31st Oct., 1918.)	...	...	Action of Lahej	...	4th-5th July, 1915	*
	...	...	Affair of Sheikh 'Othman	...	20th July, 1915	*
	...	...	Affair of Jabir	...	7th Dec., 1916	*
	...	...	Affair of Imad	...	22nd Oct., 1918	*

## APPENDIX II

### BIBLIOGRAPHY OF THE PALESTINE CAMPAIGNS

*Note.*—The following list does not pretend to be exhaustive, but includes the principal authorities on the campaigns, together with an indication of the contents and value of each work.

The Official History by the Historical Section is not only by far the most complete and authoritative work, but is extremely well written.

The following are also recommended as of great interest :—

Chapters XI. and XIII. of Vol. II. “Soldiers and Statesmen” (Policy and Strategy of the Campaign).

Preston’s “Desert Mounted Corps” (work of the cavalry).

“Revolt in the Desert” (Arab operations).

“Egypt and the Army.”

“London Men in Palestine” (regimental officer’s point of view).

“Zwischen Kaukasus und Sinai” (Kress von Kressenstein) and “Five Years in Turkey” (Liman von Sanders).

A. P. W.



Title.	Author.	Period covered.	Remarks.
I.—Official Publications. Naval and Military Despatches, Vols. i.—x.	(i.) Sir John Maxwell, 16.2.15. (ii.) Sir John Maxwell, 19.8.15. (iii.) Sir John Maxwell, 1.3.16. (iv.) Sir John Maxwell, 9.4.16.	First attack on Canal. Defence of Canal in 1915. } Western Desert.	
	(v.) Sir A. Murray, 1.6.16. (vi.) Sir A. Murray, 1.10.16. (vii.) Sir A. Murray, 1.3.17. (viii.) Sir A. Murray, 28.6.17.	Action at Katia, etc. Battle of Romani. } Advance across Sinai. } Actions at Rafa and Magdhaba. First and Second Battles of Gaza.	Sir A. Murray's despatches have been collected and published by J. M. Dent & Co., with a volume of excellent maps and some interesting appendices on the work of the railways, water supply, etc. This edition gives the complete text of the despatches, part of which was omitted in the original official publications.
	(ix.) Sir E. Allenby, 16.12.17. (x.) Sir E. Allenby, 18.9.18. (xi.) Sir E. Allenby, 31.10.18. (xii.) Sir E. Allenby, 28.6.19.	Third Battle of Gaza and capture of Jerusalem. Operations in 1918 up to September. Battle of Megiddo and advance to Aleppo. Summary of the Campaigns.	These three despatches will be found in "The Advance of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force."
	Lieut.-General Sir G. MacMunn, Captain C. Falls. Vol. i.	August 1914 to June 1917.	The best and most authoritative account of the operations.
	Vol. ii.	June 1917 to Nov. 1918.	
Australian Official History, Vol. i. Australian Official History, Vol. vii.	C. E. W. Bean. H. S. Gullett.	First attack on the Canal. 1916, 1917, 1918.	A very full, frank and well-written account, but naturally biased in favour of the Australian Light Horse.
New Zealand Official History, Vol. iii.	Lieut.-Colonel C. G. Powles.	1916, 1917, 1918.	Well-written and illustrated. Mainly concerned with the doings of the N.Z. Mounted Brigade. Gives a good picture of the mounted work in the campaign.
Operations of the E.E.F.	Colonel W. J. Foster, G.S. Army Headquarters, Melbourne.	28.10.17—31.12.17	Issued by the Australian Staff as an aid to students for military history examinations. It is largely an abbreviation of Vol. vii. of the Australian Official History.

Title.	Author.	Period covered.	Remarks.
Veterinary History of the War.	...	...	The section on Palestine contains much of interest.
II.—Non-official Accounts. The Advance of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force.	Published by <i>The Palestine News</i> , under editorship of Lieut.-Colonel H. Pirie-Gordon.	July, 1917–Oct., 1918.	This publication was compiled from official sources shortly after the end of the war. It contains General Allenby's first three despatches, orders of battle, articles on the work of the railways, transport, R.E., ordnance services, etc., and a series of situation maps, as issued by the Intelligence Branch from day to day with a diary of the daily operations. A very useful work.
The Desert Mounted Corps.	Lieut.-Colonel R. M. P. Preston.	1917–1918	The best account yet published of the work of the Mounted Corps, with much valuable comment.
Outline of the Egyptian and Palestine Campaigns.	Major-General Sir M. Bowman-Manifold.	1914–1918	A very good summary, but not always quite accurate in detail.
Egypt and the Army.	Colonel P. G. Elgood.	1914–1919	An extremely interesting account of the conditions in Egypt itself—the base of he operations—during the war.
Soldiers and Statesmen.	F.-M. Sir William Robertson.	1914–1918	Chapters XI. and XIII. of Vol. II. give the general strategy of the Palestine campaigns, and are extremely interesting.
Revolt in the Desert.	T. E. Lawrence.	1915–1918	The Arab revolt, drawn by the hand of a master, both of guerilla warfare and of English prose.
History of the Transport Services of the E.E.F.	Lieut.-Colonel G. E. Badcock.	...	A disappointing book on a most important and interesting subject. It is mainly a mass of unco-ordinated statistics.
History of the 52nd (Lowland) Division.	Lieut.-Colonel R. R. Thompson.	Jan., 1916–April, 1918.	
History of the 74th (Yeomanry) Division.	Major C. Dudley Ward.	Jan., 1916–April, 1918.	
The Yeomanry Cavalry of Worcestershire.	"C."	1914–22.	
London Men in Palestine.	Caldecott.	Oct.–Dec., 1917	A most interesting account of the fighting from the Third Battle of Gaza up to the capture of Jerusalem from the company commander's point of view.
The Diary of a Yeomanry M.O.	Captain O. Teichman.	May, 1916–June, 1918.	Gives the point of view of a junior officer in the mounted troops.
Memories of a Turkish Statesman (Translation).	Djemal Pasha.	1914–19.	Of no great interest, except on the first Turkish attack on the Canal.
With the Turks in Palestine.	Alexander Aaronsohn.	1914–15.	Gives an account of conditions in Palestine early in the war.

Title.	Author.	Period covered.	Remarks.
Lawrence and the Arabs.	R. Graves.	1915-18.	Supplements the History of the Arab revolt given in Lawrence's book.
Water Supply (Egypt and Palestine).	R.E. Institution, Chatham.	1914-18.	
III.— <i>Foreign Works.</i> Fünf Jahre im Türkei.	Liman von Sanders.	1914-18.	Of considerable interest, but too much of an apology for defeat. Has been translated into French ("Cinq Ans de Turquie"), and into American ("Five Years in Turkey") by the U.S. Naval Institute.
Yilderim.	Lieut.-Colonel Hussein Husni.	...	In Turkish only.
Yilderim. Deutsche Streiter auf heiligen Boden ( <i>Schlachten des Weltkrieges</i> , Heft 5).	Steuber.	...	The German official relation of the doings of the German units in Palestine.
Jahrbuch des Bundes der Asienkämpfer 1921, 1922.	...	...	Contains Kress von Kressenstein's "Zwischen Kaukasus und Sinai," which is the leading account of the operations from the enemy side from the outbreak of war up to the capture of Jerusalem, and various other articles on the Palestine operations. A very full summary of Kress' article appeared in the <i>R.U.S.I. Journal</i> for 1922, entitled "The Campaign in Palestine from the Enemy's Side."
L'Attaque du Canal de Suez.	Lieutenant Douin.	Feb., 1915.	An account of the first attack on the Canal, by an officer of one of the French warships present. Two good maps.
On se bat sur mer.	Paul Chack	Feb., 1915.	Contains a chapter of over 100 pages entitled "La France Sauve le Canal de Suez," giving an interesting and picturesque but somewhat imaginative account of the first Turkish attack on the Canal.
IV.— <i>Articles in Magazines, etc.</i> The Campaign in Palestine from the Enemy's Side ( <i>R.U.S.I. Journal</i> , Vol. 67, 1922).	...	Nov., 1914-Dec., 1917.	Summarised translation of Kress von Kressenstein's "Zwischen Kaukasus und Sinai."
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Title.	Author.	Period covered.	Remarks.
The Evolution of a Revolt ( <i>Army Quarterly</i> , Oct., 1920).	Colonel T. E. Lawrence.	...	An account of the genesis and strategy of the Arab revolt.
<i>Cavalry Journal</i> , Oct., 1920-July, 1923.	...	...	The numbers of the <i>Cavalry Journal</i> for these years contain an interesting account of the mounted operations, written by officers who took a leading part in them.
IV.—Articles in Magazines, etc.— <i>contd.</i>			
General Liman von Sanders on his experiences in Palestine ( <i>Army Quarterly</i> , Jan., 1922).	C. T. Atkinson.	...	Criticism of "Fünf Jahre im Turkei."
Falkenhayn in Syria ( <i>Edinburgh Review</i> , Oct., 1929).	C. Falls.	1917.	An interesting study of Falkenhayn's command of Yildirim.

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